Hi Readers,

In this issue of The Column we look at how such cooperation, especially in regard to training and knowledge-sharing, supports the work of the AHA Centre. Despite the restrictions on travel that have been imposed regionally and at a global level the first Humanitarian Emergency Logistics and Innovation Expo (HELiX) was held virtually in May. The event, which was organised jointly by the AHA Centre and the Viet Nam Disaster Management Authority (VNDMA), showed how innovation, collaboration, communication and engagement are key to managing disasters, with a particular regard to inclusion.

The EU and ASEAN launched their sixth edition of the Blue Book, highlighting cooperation between the two regions, including the LACER project, part of the EU-SAHA programme. We meet Mr. Martin Sjöholm the Training and Exercise Expert of LACER who explains the mutually beneficial role of training cooperation for all agencies involved, including the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB).

Also involved with LACER is the Estonian Rescue Board (ERB). The ERB has had a turbulent year since the outbreak of the pandemic as it set about maintaining business continuity through responding to incidents and supporting local government authorities across the country in coping with the crisis and coordinating information exchange between different local and state authorities. It also had a record year dealing with unexploded ordnance left over from the Second World War, as people looking to spend more time in nature to escape the COVID-19 restrictions went walking in the forests.

In the Diary section we report on the ASEAN Standards and Certification for Experts in Disaster Management (ASCEND), a three-year project grant-funded by the ASEAN-ROK Cooperation Fund (AKCF).

The Editor
It is heartening and exciting that even with the pandemic complicating travel and communications everywhere, the spirit of cooperation and esprit de corps continue to be alive and well. The pandemic necessitated its adaptation into an online setting. HELiX has been a welcome step, in the AHA Centre’s 10th anniversary year, as a platform for convergence of innovative minds and ideas. In this regard, HELiX supported by Temasek Foundation, the UPS Foundation and Angel Investment Network Indonesia (ANGIN) successfully united almost 100 diverse voices from humanitarian logistics actors and institutions, who ranged from academia and NGOs to government and intergovernmental organisations, as well as the private sector.

Dr. Robert de Souza, Executive Director of the Logistics Institute Asia-Pacific (LIAP) and disaster response authority in the region, noted that "[HELiX] brings all of us together to solve the problems that need to be solved, and to focus upon supply chain management, which was understated before, but is now brought to the fore." Supporting the points made in the earlier keynote speech, Executive Director of the AHA Centre Ms. Adelina Kamal emphasised during her introduction to the event the importance of a true desire to solve problems and to fulfill the stated mission of the AHA Centre in order to achieve its purpose and sustainability. The context of the ASEAN region as a disaster-prone area should drive the region forward as leaders and pioneers in humanitarian innovation. Therefore, let’s use HELiX sessions as the platform for convergence of innovative minds and ideas, that transcended and transformed the way we do things in humanitarian logistics," said Ms. Adelina.

Moreover, knowledge, engagement and collaboration are essential in actualising and executing the innovative ideas. In this regard, HELiX supported by Temasek Foundation, the UPS Foundation and Angel Investment Network Indonesia (ANGIN) successfully united almost 100 diverse voices from humanitarian logistics actors and institutions, who ranged from academia and NGOs to government and intergovernmental organisations, as well as the private sector. They delivered 21 focus session talks and two keynote speeches in the plenary sessions. Some 21 companies and institutions took part in the virtual international exhibition along with almost 1,000 attendees in total from around the world.

In the near future HELiX will be followed by the AHAckathon hacking competition in October – a hacking competition aimed at students looking to contribute innovative ideas through programming and app creation. Stay tuned for further updates on this upcoming part of HELiX.
MONTHLY DISASTER OUTLOOK

MAY 2021

For the month of May 2021, a total of 105 disasters were reported. The ASEAN Member States that were affected were Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, and Thailand. A majority of the disasters (44.16%) occurred in Indonesia, which also contributes to over 61% of the total number of affected people for the month (Cambodia: 2.3%, Malaysia: 0.4%, Myanmar: 0.3%, Philippines: 25.1%, Thailand: 11%). May 2021 saw disasters affecting 69,199 people and displacing 4,656 people in the region. May 2021 also accounted for roughly one-fifth (20.5%) of the total disasters reported so far in the current year. The majority of the disasters that occurred in May 2021 were floods (58%) and this is consistent with May of the previous year and May on a five-year average (2016-2020) indicating that there were slightly more reported disasters; almost 5 times more people affected; almost 3 times more people displaced; twice as many houses affected as same extent; 32 times fewer lives lost; 5 times fewer people suffering injuries/spaces; and lastly, 100 times fewer people remaining.

According to the ASEAN Specialised Meteorological Centre (ASMC), during May 2021, the largest positive anomalies (wetter conditions by the beginning of June. The sea surface temperature conditions in the central and eastern Pacific Ocean showed a transition to Southwest Monsoon conditions. With a combination of warm sea surface temperatures and increased convection, the month’s rainfall outlook between the models consulted for much of the southern ASEAN region strengthened to blow from the southwest to southeast, in line with the transition to Southwest Monsoon conditions. With a strengthening of the prevailing winds, Southwest Monsoon conditions are expected to become fully established in June 2021. The Southwest Monsoon season is likely to extend through the June-August period and is the traditional dry season for the southern ASEAN region, characterised by persistent dry conditions over most of the southern ASEAN region. Concurrently, the prevailing winds over the southern ASEAN region are expected to blow from the southwest to southeast, in line with the transition to Southwest Monsoon conditions. With a strengthening of the prevailing winds, Southwest Monsoon conditions are expected to become fully established in June 2021. The Southwest Monsoon season is likely to extend through the June-August period and is the traditional dry season for the southern ASEAN region. As the southern ASEAN region enters the traditional dry season, several factors will contribute to an increase in the risk of drought events; increased hotspot activities and the development of smoke plumes are likely to reignite concerns in parts of the southern ASEAN region that experience prolonged dry conditions.

Seismology (PHIVOLCS). A Magnitude 6.2 earthquake (later reported by Indonesia’s Badan Meteorologi, Klimatologi dan Geofisika (BMKG), Pusat Vulkanologi dan Mitigasi Bencana Geologi (PVMBG), Philippine Institute for Volcanology and Seismology (PHIVOLCS)) and are continuously being monitored. Showed recent activity but they have not resulted in significant events.

The AHA Centre’s estimation is based on data and information shared by National Disaster Management Organisations (NDMOs) and other relevant agencies from ASEAN Member States, international organisations, and news agencies. Further updates can be found in the regularly updated disaster severity charts, and lists of data and information can be accessed at: http://adinet.ahacentre.org/reports.

Written by: Keith Paolo Landicho, Sadhu Zukhruf Janottama, Lawrence Anthony Dimailig

Further information on each recorded significant disaster, description, and detail of data and information are available at: ndmo-adinews.blogs.com
As Estonia was the scene of fierce fighting during the Second World War, one of our challenges each year is the recovery of war relics such as unexploded ordnance. In 2020, a record-breaking 9,041 explosive devices were defused. The main reason for this is probably that the winter and spring of 2020 were warm and more people spent time in nature because of COVID-19 restrictions and many discoveries were made by people walking in the forests.

In 2020 the work of the ERB was greatly transformed by COVID-19. Cooperation with partners from different countries also suffered due to the pandemic. Many trips and meetings were postponed and several had to be cancelled. Luckily, several employees could still participate in international cooperation events to develop partnerships, learn something new and help people in need. At the end of the year, Sudan suffered from a refugee crisis, when thousands of refugees arrived daily from Ethiopia fleeing a military conflict there. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) asked the International Humanitarian Partnership (IHP) network for support in creating housing and working conditions for the people involved in solving the crisis. Estonia contributed with a base camp technician during the period of 19 December 2020 to 23 January 2021. The UN Secretary-General’s special representative for the Horn of Africa, Michael Keating, led the UNHCR team in Khartoum. Thanks to the cooperation and support of our partners, hurricane, Syria, Ethiopia, Sudan, and many other countries also suffered due to the pandemic. Many trips and meetings were postponed and several had to be cancelled.

As mentioned above, one of the tasks for the ERB was the maintenance of business continuity. In order to achieve that, we worked out different solutions for our first responders. As we were in a pandemic that mainly spread through contact, it was important to work out how to reduce such contact. We tried to maintain every fire station as a bubble, and within each fire station every shift also. So, the changing of shifts in stations was made contactless. We tried to avoid moving firefighters between stations as we did previously in order to maintain a lifesaving number of personnel in a station. Instead, we tried to maintain every fire station as a bubble, and within each fire station every shift also. So, the changing of shifts in stations was made contactless. We tried to avoid moving firefighters between stations as we did previously in order to maintain a lifesaving number of personnel in a station. Instead, we worked out different solutions for our first responders. As we were in a pandemic that mainly spread through contact, it was important to work out how to reduce such contact. We tried to maintain every fire station as a bubble, and within each fire station every shift also. So, the changing of shifts in stations was made contactless. We tried to avoid moving firefighters between stations as we did previously in order to maintain a lifesaving number of personnel in a station. Instead, we worked out different solutions for our first responders. As we were in a pandemic that mainly spread through contact, it was important to work out how to reduce such contact. We tried to maintain every fire station as a bubble, and within each fire station every shift also. So, the changing of shifts in stations was made contactless. We tried to avoid moving firefighters between stations as we did previously in order to maintain a lifesaving number of personnel in a station. Instead, we worked out different solutions for our first responders. As we were in a pandemic that mainly spread through contact, it was important to work out how to reduce such contact. We tried to maintain every fire station as a bubble, and within each fire station every shift also. So, the changing of shifts in stations was made contactless. We tried to avoid moving firefighters between stations as we did previously in order to maintain a lifesaving number of personnel in a station. Instead, we worked out different solutions for our first responders. As we were in a pandemic that mainly spread through contact, it was important to work out how to reduce such contact. We tried to maintain every fire station as a bubble, and within each fire station every shift also. So, the changing of shifts in stations was made contactless. We tried to avoid moving firefighters between stations as we did previously in order to maintain a lifesaving number of personnel in a station. Instead, we worked out different solutions for our first responders. As we were in a pandemic that mainly spread through contact, it was important to work out how to reduce such contact. We tried to maintain every fire station as a bubble, and within each fire station every shift also. So, the changing of shifts in stations was made contactless. We tried to avoid moving firefighters between stations as we did previously in order to maintain a lifesaving number of personnel in a station. Instead, we worked out different solutions for our first responders. As we were in a pandemic that mainly spread through contact, it was important to work out how to reduce such contact. We tried to maintain every fire station as a bubble, and within each fire station every shift also. So, the changing of shifts in stations was made contactless. We tried to avoid moving firefighters between stations as we did previously in order to maintain a lifesaving number of personnel in a station. Instead, we worked out different solutions for our first responders. As we were in a pandemic that mainly spread through contact, it was important to work out how to reduce such contact. We tried to maintain every fire station as a bubble, and within each fire station every shift also. So, the changing of shifts in stations was made contactless. We tried to avoid moving firefighters between stations as we did previously in order to maintain a lifesaving number of personnel in a station. Instead, we worked out different solutions for our first responders. As we were in a pandemic that mainly spread through contact, it was important to work out how to reduce such contact. We tried to maintain every fire station as a bubble, and within each fire station every shift also. So, the changing of shifts in stations was made contactless. We tried to avoid moving firefighters between stations as we did previously in order to maintain a lifesaving number of personnel in a station. Instead, we worked out different solutions for our first responders. As we were in a pandemic that mainly spread through contact, it was important to work out how to reduce such contact. We tried to maintain every fire station as a bubble, and within each fire station every shift also. So, the changing of shifts in stations was made contactless. We tried to avoid moving firefighters between stations as we did previously in order to maintain a lifesaving number of personnel in a station. Instead, we worked out different solutions for our first responders. As we were in a pandemic that mainly spread through contact, it was important to work out how to reduce such contact. We tried to maintain every fire station as a bubble, and within each fire station every shift also. So, the changing of shifts in stations was made contactless. We tried to avoid moving firefighters between stations as we did previously in order to maintain a lifesaving number of personnel in a station. Instead, we worked out different solutions for our first responders. As we were in a pandemic that mainly spread through contact, it was important to work out how to reduce such contact. We tried to maintain every fire station as a bubble, and within each fire station every shift also. So, the changing of shifts in stations was made contactless. We tried to avoid moving firefighters between stations as we did previously in order to maintain a lifesaving number of personnel in a station. Instead, we worked out different solutions for our first responders. As we were in a pandemic that mainly spread through contact, it was important to work out how to reduce such contact. We tried to maintain every fire station as a bubble, and within each fire station every shift also. So, the changing of shifts in stations was made contactless. We tried to avoid moving firefighters between stations as we did previously in order to maintain a lifesaving number of personnel in a station. Instead, we worked out different solutions for our first responders. As we were in a pandemic that mainly spread through contact, it was important to work out how to reduce such contact. We tried to maintain every fire station as a bubble, and within each fire station every shift also. So, the changing of shifts in stations was made contactless. We tried to avoid moving firefighters between stations as we did previously in order to maintain a lifesaving number of personnel in a station. Instead, we worked out different solutions for our first responders. As we were in a pandemic that mainly spread through contact, it was important to work out how to reduce such contact. We tried to maintain every fire station as a bubble, and within each fire station every shift also. So, the changing of shifts in stations was made contactless. We tried to avoid moving firefighters between stations as we did previously in order to maintain a lifesaving number of personnel in a station. Instead, we worked out different solutions for our first responders. As we were in a pandemic that mainly spread through contact, it was important to work out how to reduce such contact. We tried to maintain every fire station as a bubble, and within each fire station every shift also. So, the changing of shifts in stations was made contactless. We tried to avoid moving firefighters between stations as we did previously in order to maintain a lifesaving number of personnel in a station. Instead, we worked out different solutions for our first responders. As we were in a pandemic that mainly spread through contact, it was important to work out how to reduce such contact. We tried to maintain every fire station as a bubble, and within each fire station every shift also. So, the changing of shifts in stations was made contactless. We tried to avoid moving firefighters between stations as we did previously in order to maintain a lifesaving number of personnel in a station. Instead, we worked out different solutions for our first responders. As we were in a pandemic that mainly spread through contact, it was important to work out how to reduce such contact. We tried to maintain every fire station as a bubble, and within each fire station every shift also. So, the changing of shifts in stations was made contactless. We tried to avoid moving firefighters between stations as we did previously in order to maintain a lifesaving number of personnel in a station. Instead, we worked out different solutions for our first responders. As we were in a pandemic that mainly spread through contact, it was important to work out how to reduce such contact. We tried to maintain every fire station as a bubble, and within each fire station every shift also. So, the changing of shifts in stations was made contactless. We tried to avoid moving firefighters between stations as we did previously in order to maintain a lifesaving number of personnel in a station. Instead, we worked out different solutions for our first responders. As we were in a pandemic that mainly spread through contact, it was important to work out how to reduce such contact. We tried to maintain every fire station as a bubble, and within each fire station every shift also. So, the changing of shifts in stations was made contactless. We tried to avoid moving firefighters between stations as we did previously in order to maintain a lifesaving number of personnel in a station. Instead, we worked out different solutions for our first responders. As we were in a pandemic that mainly spread through contact, it was important to work out how to reduce such contact. We tried to maintain every fire station as a bubble, and within each fire station every shift also. So, the changing of shifts in stations was made contactless. We tried to avoid moving firefighters between stations as we did previously in order to maintain a lifesaving number of personnel in a station. Instead, we worked out different solutions for our first responders.
EU-ASEAN BLUE BOOK 2021

In conjunction with the celebration of the 44 years of partnership between the two regions, the European Union (EU) Mission to ASEAN officially launched the EU-ASEAN Blue Book 2021 on Friday, 7 May 2021. The sixth edition of the Blue Book highlights the cooperation between the two regions, including the partnership with the AHA Centre through the Integrated Programme in Enhancing the Capacity of the AHA Centre and ASEAN Emergency Response Mechanisms (EU-SAHA) project.

The EU Ambassador to ASEAN H.E. Mr. Igor Driesmans explained that the book illustrated how the diverse cooperation had a tangible impact on individuals and communities. "The EU and ASEAN became strategic partners based on our shared values of effective multilateralism and rules-based international order. We have come so far as partner regions, having stepped up our relations to strategic economic, political, development and security cooperation," he said during the virtual launch.

One of the important elements of cooperation highlighted in the book is how to reduce disasters caused by natural hazards. The chapter features the EU-SAHA project, which was officially launched in January 2020. The EU provided support worth EUR 8 million aimed at strengthening the capacity of the AHA Centre, to achieve operational excellence in disaster monitoring and emergency response. This project is implemented through a combination of a direct grant to the AHA Centre, as well as capacity building by EU Member States’ civil protection agencies through the LACER project.

Executive Director of the AHA Centre, Ms Adelina Kamal, quoted in the book chapter, stressed that the project would also benefit the ASEAN Member States through its support for a number of capacity-building activities, workshops and other events. "The support from the European Union through this project is crucial for the AHA Centre to ensure its continuing development. It allows the Centre to develop its internal mechanism and expand at the same time," she said.

The book also highlighted a success story from the LACER project as part of the EU-SAHA programme. Implemented by the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) and the Estonia Rescue Board (ERB), LACER provides capacity-building support to the AHA Centre through a series of knowledge-sharing activities. The first phase of the project is designed to lay the foundations of the project’s work with the AHA Centre.

“It’s important to build our relationship with the AHA Centre on trust, and despite the pandemic we have managed to do just that.”

Mr. Carl Johan Breitholtz, LACER project manager, concluded.

The book can be downloaded at https://euinasean.eu/download/
On 20 May, 2021 the AHA Centre held the second project steering committee (PSC) meeting of ASCEND. The meeting was presided over by co-chairs Indonesia and Singapore of the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management (ACDM) Working Group on Global Leadership and attended by the Mission of the Republic Korea (ROK) to ASEAN, the Korean National Fire Agency (KNFA), the ASEAN-ROK Development Cooperation Programme Management Team (AKPMT), the ASEAN Secretariat and the AHA Centre.

During the meeting, the AHA Centre presented the ASCEND project implementation progress report for December 2020 to April 2021. It provided updates on the overall implementation of the ASCEND project and covered three major areas of work, namely the development of documents and systems, the development of communication materials, and continued coordination and expanded collaboration with various stakeholders. Due to limitations brought about by the prolonged COVID-19 pandemic, the ASCEND project management team (PMT) has focused its efforts on conducting studies, developing guidelines and establishing the IT system needed for the certification process. The AHA Centre expects to introduce and pilot use all of the materials and the IT system within workshops and training plans for late this year and early next year. In addition to the aforementioned progress, the ASCEND-PMT of the AHA Centre has also expanded its collaboration to more than 90 individuals from at least 30 institutions or organisations.

The ASCEND-PMT also presented updates on the establishment of the ASCEND Reference Group. The ASCEND Reference Group aims to ensure that the preparation and implementation of the ASCEND project incorporates all recommendations from the ASEAN Member States. On this occasion, the PSC members discussed the possibility of establishing an effective communication flow between the ASCEND-PMT and the Reference Group members.

Lastly, the meeting explored the possibility of conducting an ASCEND benchmarking visit to the Republic of Korea. Given the ongoing COVID-19 situation, it was agreed that the AHA Centre and the KNFA should explore alternatives to conducting the benchmarking visit aside from a physical visit. One of the ideas from the PSC members was to combine a virtual study visit first before considering a physical visit later. The AHA Centre and the KNFA gave an assurance that these options would be considered when developing the concept note. The concept note will also include the risk and benefit analysis of conducting benchmarking visits based on the alternative options available. The co-chairs of the ACDM Working Group Global Leadership closed the meeting by thanking the PSC members for the fruitful and productive discussion during the meeting.

ASCEND is a three-year project grant-funded by the ASEAN-ROK Cooperation Fund (AKCF) to the tune of USD 3.3 million. It aims to enhance the quality of human resources within ASEAN in disaster management through establishing a common set of standard skills and competencies, along with a validation process.
For Martin, trainings and exercises are the key to achieving new ways of working and improving current practices, as participants can learn in a relatively relaxed environment, without the stress of major consequences. The most important component of the LACER project is information management. It is Marin’s belief that if the AHA Centre can be established as the main source of information during a disaster, this will have a beneficial effect in the affected country or region. Today, information travels very fast and it is essential to be on top of things when a disaster strikes and to have the right support in terms of personnel and equipment.

Martin has worked in the field for the last 15 years in disasters, conducting assessments and reporting. As a mentor for the Assessment Mission Training (AMC) in Cyprus every year he learned about how assessments should be performed, and training of the ASEAN Emergency Response and Assessment Team (ASEAN-ERAT) is one of the prioritised sections he would like to work on. The ASEAN Regional Disaster Emergency Response Simulation Exercise (ARDEX) is another priority.

As to what he hopes to achieve from the project, he emphasises mutual support.

“I hope to learn more about how the [countries in the] region support each other and how LACER can support this work to be more effective and precise,”

Implementing material and work from the European Response Coordination Centre (ERCC) into the AHA Centre is also a very important component of the project.

When not at work Martin enjoys relaxing with his wife Marie at their home outside Gothenburg in Sweden, fixing up his house and babysitting his grandchildren. As the Swedish summer approaches, he is particularly looking forward to barbecues with family and friends.
The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was established on 8 August 1967. The Member States of the Association are Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam. The ASEAN Secretariat is based in Jakarta, Indonesia. As set out in the ASEAN Declaration, the aims and purposes of ASEAN among others are to accelerate the economic growth, social progress, cultural development, to promote regional peace and stability as well as to improve active collaboration and cooperation.

The ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) is a legally-binding regional policy framework for cooperation, coordination, technical assistance and resource mobilisation in all aspects of disaster management in the 10 ASEAN Member States. The objective of AADMER is to provide an effective mechanism to achieve substantial reduction of disaster losses in lives and in social, economic and environmental assets, and to jointly respond to emergencies through concerted national efforts.

The AHA Centre is an inter-govermental organisation established on 17 November 2011, through the signing of the Agreement on the Establishment of the AHA Centre by ASEAN Foreign Ministers, witnessed by the ASEAN Heads of State / Government from 10 ASEAN Member States: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam. The Centre was set-up to facilitate the cooperation and coordination among ASEAN Member States and with the United Nations and international organisations for disaster management and emergency response in the ASEAN region.