



KERATAN AKHBAR

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Fishermen casting their nets into the Mekong River. PIXABAY PIC

DIRE WARNING

RISING CONCERNS AS MEKONG TURNS BLUE

The shift in colour could be an indication that the river is running dry, say experts

VIENTIANE

THE Mekong River has turned blue in some locations recently, attracting the attention of many on social media, including those who were concerned about the unusual phenomenon.

The river, which flows through six countries, took on the appear-

ance of seawater in recent weeks, according to residents in the border town of Thakhek in central Laos and Nakhon Phanom in Thailand.

The *Laotian Times* reported that the phenomenon had generated a buzz on social media with stunning images of the river being shared, as well as the growing concern that an ecological problem was behind the appearance of the seemingly pristine waters.

Experts believed that the change in the river's appearance was a dire warning, as the water levels had dropped to only 1m in depth, the lowest recorded reading in the last five decades.

Sandbanks were also becoming a common feature, leading conservationists to believe that the

shift in colour could be an indication that the river was running dry.

Arthit Panasoon, president of a conservation group in the north-eastern province of Nakhon Phanom, also supported the conservationists' theory. He said the water's colour shift was due to the flow of the shallowing river slowing down to the point where sedimentation, usually disturbed from the riverbed by the currents, would sink and remain unmoved, thus producing the aquamarine colour.

In an interview with Thai PBS World, he said this was caused by the dry season and the construction of dams in neighbouring countries such as Laos and China.