

### PHOTO ESSAY

## New Waves

Photos by SAYAN CHUENODOMSAVAD



"The Chinese make the river suit the boats, but we make the boats suit the river," said a Chiang Khong resident. To people downstream, the Navigation Channel Improvement Project reflects the thinking that the river ought to adjust to the vessels. Along the Mekong River, governments are removing reefs, installing winching facilities and more than a hundred navigation markers and signboards.



People downstream are worried that bigger vessels created by the movement of cargo ships along the Mekong may push smaller vessels away. In the same way, traditional fishing, local knowledge and equipment are likely to be threatened by easier commercial navigation along the Mekong.



Chinese cargo vessels cannot yet reach Luang Prabang through the Mekong River, but Chinese goods — especially cheap electronic goods and the toys these boys are playing with — already dominate the Luang Prabang market.

Luang Prabang used to be a closed city, largely undisturbed by the modern world. More comfortable means of transport have brought many more visitors to it, forcing it to open its doors wider to the world.



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