

Headline: Asia vulnerable to rising sea levels

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BANGKOK — New research published Tuesday finds that previous projections for the number of people who will be impacted by sea level rise have been too optimistic.

A new projection method which uses artificial intelligence has found that as many as 150 million people are currently living on land that will be below the high-tide line by 2050, three times more than previously thought. And much of the impacts of sea level rise will be felt by a handful of coastal Asian countries.

The paper, which was published in the journal Nature Communications, estimates that 70 percent of the total number of people worldwide currently living on vulnerable land are in eight Asian countries: China, Bangladesh, India, Vietnam, Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines, and Japan.

China alone accounts for 15–28 percent of global exposure for extreme coastal water level events. The country could see land now home to a total of 43 million people below high tide by end of century.

And, in countries south of China, the exposure to rising water levels “may be an order of magnitude more serious than previously expected,” writes the paper’s authors.

More than 20 million people in Vietnam, for example, almost one-quarter of the population, currently live on land that will be flooded at high tide. Much of Ho Chi Minh City, the country’s economic hub, is counted in that land.

The story is similarly grave in Thailand. More than 10 percent of Thailand’s residents now live on land that is likely to be inundated by 2050. And, like Ho Chi Minh City, Bangkok is at serious risk, with much of the city set to disappear under high tide waters.

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