

Report on the 25th Asian Conference on Remote Sensing

by Dr. Sally E. Goldin

The Asian Association on Remote Sensing (AARS) hosted the 25th Asian Conference on Remote Sensing, in Chiang Mai, Thailand from November 22 to 26, 2004. AARS is the foremost professional and scientific association within the Asia-Pacific region concerned with geospatial issues. Its annual conference, the location of which rotates among its members, is one of its primary activities.

The Silver Jubilee of ACRS was both ground-breaking and record-breaking. It was the largest and most diverse ACRS ever held. Seven hundred attendees from forty one countries participated, attending tutorials, keynotes, technical sessions and the commercial exhibition. Nearly three hundred papers and over a hundred posters were presented, on a wide range of topics including hyperspectral data processing, digital photogrammetry, data fusion, GIS modeling and decision support, spatial databases, Web-based GIS, and spatial database design. Application-oriented papers included problems in archeology, agriculture, climate monitoring and environmental change, disaster management, forestry, geology, soils, and water resources.

The Conference was honored by the presence of Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn of Thailand, who has a long-time interest as well as an educational background in remote sensing and GIS. HRH Princess Sirindhorn presented the keynote address and also opened the technical exhibition.

As usual, official delegates from AARS ordinary (Asian), associate (non-Asian) and sustaining (corporate) members met several times during the week. Among the more important items on the General Conference agenda were the following:

- For many years, the University of Tokyo has generously donated space and resources to AARS. This arrangement will soon come to an end, however, and AARS needs a new home and an independent identity. Thus, AARS is in the process of becoming a registered non-profit organization in Thailand. The Thai Geoinformatics and Space Technology Development Agency (GISTDA) and the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) will share responsibility for housing the new organization, to be called AARS-GEO.
- The *Asian Journal of Geoinformatics*, a peer-reviewed journal for researchers and scientists in the Asia-Pacific region, was founded by AARS four years ago. Within the next six months, the journal will move its office from AIT to GISTDA in order to give it a clear status as a professional rather than an internal academic publication. Dr. Ryutaro Tateishi of Chiba University has agreed to become the editor of this journal.
- AARS officially approved a project to develop a small, inexpensive multi-frequency, multi-polarization SAR satellite called RICESAT, for the benefit of all the countries of Asia. The objective is to develop a trans-national, non-military, non-governmental satellite whose design focuses the needs of users, especially rice farmers, throughout the region. The project that will pool the expertise of the scientists and engineers from all over Asia. Funding will be solicited from private or university sources rather than from national governments. A technical committee headed by Prof. Guo Hua Dong (guohd@irsa.ac.cn) was established to develop preliminary specifications and present them at the next ACRS. The goal is to launch RICESAT by 2009, the

thirtieth anniversary of the establishment of AARS.

- Membership applications were accepted from four new countries: Bhutan, Cambodia, Russia, and Saudi Arabia. This brings the total number of ordinary members to 28.
- The members confirmed that the 26th ACRS in 2005 will be hosted by Vietnam, in Hanoi, and the 27th ACRS in 2006 will take place in Ulaan Baatar, Mongolia.

As is traditional, the 25th ACRS offered many opportunities for establishing or renewing international friendships. Highlights included the welcome banquet and cultural show, where each national group was responsible for presenting some entertainment, and the farewell party on the banks of the Mae Ping River, which coincided with the Thai Loy Krathong festival celebrating the end of the rainy season.

For a summary and photos from the conference, visit the ACRS 25 website at <http://acrs2004.gistda.or.th>. Information on the 2005 ACRS can be found at <http://www.acrs2005.ac.vn>. General questions about the Asian Association on Remote Sensing can be submitted to Ms. Chiwako Fujino, secretary of AARS, at chiwa@iis.u-tokyo.ac.jp.



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