



The

Shwe Gas

Bulletin

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Shwe Gas Issue Raised in ILO's Special Sitting



Photo: Arakan .net

Force labour in Burma western Arakan State is being continued by Local Authorities.

July 5, 2005

Mr. KANG, The Worker member of the Republic of Korea raised the issue of the Shwe Gas Project in Burma western Arakan State at ILO Conference Burma special sitting on June 4, 2005.

Mr. KANG pointed out in the special sitting that the increase in development of the armed forces under the pretext of guarding the pipeline and great concern had been expressed about the project and Daewoo's (major share holder in the project) consortium possible serious effect on local people, both in Arakan and Chin States, proposed pipeline route areas, according to ILO Official Records.

Forced relocation, forced labor, summary executions, torture and other human rights violations have been taken

place along the proposed pipeline areas in relation to Unocal and Total corporation in Yadana project, he cited Nyi Nyi Lwin, assistance director of Arakan National Council presentation on the Shwe project in the workshop on "What are the Problems in the Shwe Natural Gas Project", held in Seoul.

The special sitting noted that the extent of forced labor in Burma had not significantly changed and its worst forms continued, and expressed particular alarm at the Government's stated intention to prosecute those it accuses of making false forced labor complaints and the apparent intimidation of complainants. Other serious issues in need of urgent resolution involve outstanding serious

allegations of forced labour, the freedom of movement of the Liaison Officer, and the issuing of visas to strengthen the ILO presence in Burma.

The special sitting also noting that the "wait and see" attitude adopted by most members since 2001 cannot continue, the Committee urged tripartite members to urgently review their relations with Myanmar, including foreign direct investment and state and military-owned enterprises, and report back before the Governing Body meeting in November. Depending on developments in Myanmar the Governing Body should then be ready to consider new and further steps.

Shwe gas activists claim that through their partnership with the SPDC on the Shwe Gas Project, Daewoo and their stake partners will be responsible for the perpetuation of severe and widespread human rights and environmental abuses.

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Editorial

The Arakan Gas Pipeline Campaign Committee was formed in India in 2004. The campaign's target is to educate Indian people, government and civil societies concerning human rights violations, forced labour, and political repression, to stop India state-owned energy firms from investing in gas exploration in the Arakan State and overall from buying gas from Burma. The reason: campaigners express the income generated from the gas sales directly go to Burma's military regime; empowering them to oppress their own people. Thus, the campaigners feel that it's not the right time to invest and buy gas from Burma.

In Arakan State, since the military took power in 1988 young men illegally go abroad to seek jobs to support their families back home, as their livelihoods in Burma don't generate enough income to survive. About five thousands young men work as illegal migrant workers in Malaysia. Their dreams are to support their families back in Burma; often they meet with arrests and sometimes they end up in prison. About ten thousand young men are in Thailand, they mostly work as fisherman. Health care is not provided for them, and often the Thai business owners they work for exploit them.

Another half million young Arakanese men go to mainland Burma, Rangoon, Mandalay, and other major cities where hard labour jobs are available.

With many men away from Arakan State, Arakanese women are left in a vulnerable and depressives state. Military personnel rape women and force them for sexual services. In one account, a Malaysian woman who works for human rights asked the Arakanese migrant workers how many men have remained in Arakan State to assist their mothers, sisters, and spouses. The reason behind it was she worried about sexual violence against Arakanese women that occurs while their husbands are away from home.

The cause of the Arakanese mass migration is predominantly based upon the Burmese junta's repression, human rights violations, use of forced labour, and state economic sanctions. There are a few small factories in the Arakan State. Agriculture and farming businesses are controlled by the regime. The fishing industry managed by the junta from Rangoon and the confiscation and over-taxing of land also has a tremendous impact. It is difficult for ordinary people to survival under the current unresponsive public administration. Life thus becomes dreamless.

Moreover, another account from a tourist who recently visited the Arakan State claimed many children have been seen sleeping on the steps of pagodas (public Buddhists shrines that are outside); this was hardly ever seen in the past.

To this end, India (the largest democracy in the world) should at least consider the people of Arakan and Burma's basic human needs for food, shelter, and protection, before working with Military Junta. Without meeting basic needs the future existence of the Arakanese community is uncertain. The Indian people have a democracy; the Burmese people want democracy and representation. There seems to be a contradiction in India's understanding of democracy as it directly assists the oppressive regime of Burma.

The regime doesn't have any interest to serve the people of Burma, including: providing public goods, health care, and education improvement. The ruling generals are only interested in power, money, and stability for their families and relatives. This mind set has materialized to create a society of misery, hardship, hopelessness, and overall a feeling of indignity in Arakan.

India, who knows poverty, should question whether its investment in Burma and buying gas from the poorest state, Arakan, is moral and just. If it is not, Indian leaders, people, and civil societies should listen to the outcry of the campaigners, as this is a matter of justice, human rights, and democracy.

This campaign begun out of peoples' suffering, and has led to action. This campaign is the voice of those who are suffering and this voice should speak loud to the ears and hearts of Indians.

Arakanese Villagers Are Being Forced to Aid in the Construction of the Gas Pipeline Between Burma and India

Narinjara News

8/1/2005

Arakanese villagers, 500 in total, from the northern parts of Arakan state, have been forced to work on clearing a path for the construction of a gas pipeline between Burma and India.

The villages being forced to partake in the labor are from the northern regions of Kyauk Taw Township and the southern regions of Palatwa, according to local sources.

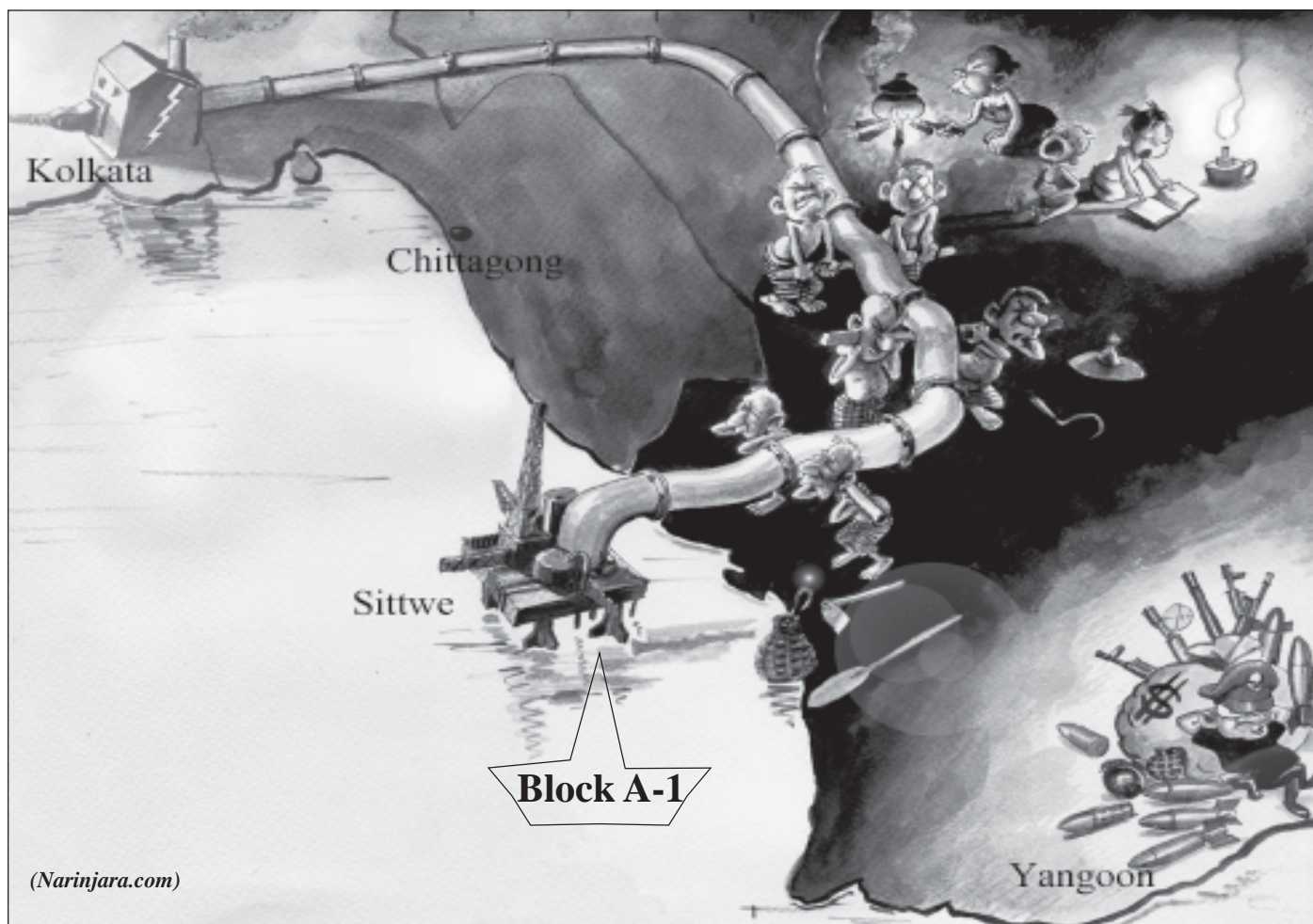
Over 30 villages in the Kyauk Taw Township fell victims to the Construction of the Gas Pipeline. Those included are Shwe Pray Tha, Tha See Roa, Kyauk Guu Zuu, Thone Soang Zuu, Myauk Taung, A Laee Kyan, Kyauk Tan, Watt Mine, Tha Htae Khaung, Paut Taw, Minn Tha Taung, Shwe Hlaing Roa, Sein Chrong, Late Ma, Kroan Ma, Kha Maung, Mala Thit, Sinn Owao Khaung, Yarla Roa, Sai Aung Roa, Sonn Kaing, Pada Chait, Paut Taw Phalong, Mahamuni, Thara Tapon, Kyaukta Lone, Thein Tan, Shwe Ta Hlay, Roa Ma Prin, Sien Kraone, Late Ma Roa and War Ma Kya.

The villages have to clear the forests on the path of the future pipeline, level the path by cutting the hills and filling the earth with hand tools and to build temporary bridges to cross creeks, says a villager from the region who was forced to participate in construction.

The villages located on the path of the Pipeline have been ordered to relocate by the military personals by the end of this raining season. Sein Krone, Late Ma Roa and Paut Taw will have to be relocated. There will be no compensation or any assistance for the relocation, says a villager.

Battalions of the Burmese army, the light infantry battalions (374), (375) and (376) involved in forcing the villagers to work on the construction of the pipeline are based in the Kyauk Taw Township.

It was learned that the forced labor is conducted under the direction of the Commander of the Western Command of the Burmese junta, and foreign tourists are not allowed to come near the area. #



Shwe Gas may be exported to Thailand

Burma is looking for US\$ 4 billion in investments to develop the Shwe fields

Junly 13, 2005

Burma is looking to export gas to India via a pipeline and possibly also Thailand from the recently explored Block A-1 (the Shwe fields) offshore Burma's western Arakan State. They have also looked at plans to build two liquefied natural gas (LNG) plants that would produce 7 million tons of LNG per annum, reported International Oil Daily on U Soe Myint, Director General of the Burma's energy ministry's energy planning department, from information he shared at the 2005 ASEAN Energy Business Forum in Siem Reap, Cambodia.

U Soe Myint said in his presentation that Burma is looking for US\$4 billion in investments to develop the Shwe fields. Potential buyers of the gas include India, South Korea and Thailand. Gas could come from the

project as early as 2010. Daewoo and its partners are carrying out a further drilling program to assess the blocks, which should be completed by the second quarter of 2006, according to IOD.

South Korea's Daewoo has found large natural gas deposits at the Shwe fields that could total between 11.3 trillion cubic feet and 19.1 TCF including the latest discovery in April. Daewoo operates the block and holds a 60% stake, along with Korea Gas Cop. (Kogas) and India's state owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) and Gas Authority of India Ltd. (GAIL).

Block A-1, Shwe fields, may also provide additional exports to Thailand. Burma's existing natural gas exports to Thailand generate US\$1 billion in

revenue to the country, which has been saddled with economic sanctions.

The controversial Yadana gas project's 19 percent stake holder Thailand's PTTEP (which is 64 percent state owned) announced in the late July that it signed an agreement with Burmese military regime for the exploration of block M-11 in the Gulf of Martaban, where it plans to complete seismic surveys, and drill one exploration well.

Negotiations between PTTEP and the Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise have been conducted "very quietly until very recently", according to Irrawaddy news.

Please sign the petition on the www.shwe.org website.

Burma Visit Highlights India's "Look East" Strategy

By Sarath Kumara
(wsws.org)

6 April 2005

Indian Foreign Minister Natwar Singh made a four-day visit to Burma in late March for discussions with the country's military junta on closer relations. The trip was not the first by a top Indian politician, nor was there much media coverage. But it does highlight a significant, though little publicised, feature of New Delhi's strategy. It is the so-called "Look East" policy—an economic and strategic orientation to South East Asia.

Singh met with Burma's Foreign Minister, Nyan Win, as well as other senior figures, including Prime Minister Lieutenant General Soe Win and Than Shwe, chairman of the ruling State Peace and Development Council. According to Indian officials, a range of economic and security issues were discussed. A further ministerial meeting in Delhi was agreed to discuss boosting trade and improving road and rail connections between the two countries.

Speaking in Rangoon, Singh declared that India wanted a "long-term partnership" with Burma. Current bilateral trade is \$1 billion and the two governments are aiming to double the figure. India has already extended a \$7 million loan to Burma for two telecom projects and announced a grant of \$3 million for IT-related ventures. Indian companies are involved in oil and gas exploration in Burma.

The developing relations between India and Burma are a relatively recent phenomenon. Previous Congress-led Indian governments were critical of the junta, its brutal 1988 crackdown on student-led demonstrations and supported the opposition National League for Democracy (NLD) led by Aung San Suu Kyi. India provided sanctuary and financial assistance to fleeing pro-democracy activists and honoured Suu Kyi with a Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding in 1995.

From the mid-1990s, a shift took place in India's attitude to the Burmese junta that was deepened under the subsequent Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) led government of Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee. New Delhi began to shelve its criticisms. Since the BJP's defeat last year, the new Congress-led government has accelerated ties with Burma. Junta leader Than Shwe was given the red carpet treatment last October when he became the first Burmese head of state to visit India in 24 years. Immediately prior to Than Shwe's arrival, the Indian government attempted to shut down a conference of pro-democracy Burmese

activists in New Delhi and denied a visa to one of the convention's key figures.

New Delhi's attempts to woo the Burmese generals are based on several considerations. Not only is India keen to gain access to Burma's oil and gas, but a land route through the country to South East Asia is an essential component of its broader "Look East" policy.

India's demand for oil and gas is expanding rapidly and Burma is a potential source. In January, India signed an agreement in principle with Burma and Bangladesh to build a pipeline from Burmese offshore gas fields via Bangladesh to India. The deal is yet to be sealed as Bangladesh is seeking transit rights across Indian territory to Nepal and Bhutan, on top of annual pipeline fees of \$125 million.

India has also gained Burmese assistance in cracking down on various armed separatist movements based in northeastern India. A number of these groups shelter in Burma, which shares a common 1,640 km border with India. Last November the Indian military launched a major operation involving 6,000 troops to hunt down rebels in the northeastern state of Manipur. The Burmese military sealed the border to block off any escape.

One of the reasons New Delhi wants to reach a deal with, or crush, the various separatist groups is to open up the northeast to mineral exploration, including for oil, gas and coal. The state of Assam currently produces about 15 percent of India's oil needs. Recently, new gas fields have been discovered in eastern Assam and others are under survey in the neighbouring state of Arunachal Pradesh.

Burma is also an arena of rivalry between India and China, both of which have ambitions to play a more dominant role in the region. While India joined other countries in criticising and imposing sanctions on the Burmese junta after 1988, China strengthened its longstanding ties and became the regime's main economic, political and military backer. Beijing provided financial aid, economic investment and helped the Burmese armed forces to modernise and expand from 180,000 to 450,000 personnel.

For China, Burma is an important component of its strategy to prevent its encirclement by the US and its allies and to secure vital naval routes to oil supplies in the Middle East. For New Delhi, Chinese influence in Burma is a threat to India's plans for naval dominance in the Bay of Bengal and an obstacle to its grander aspirations for economic and strategic influence in South East Asia.

continue

India's "Look East" policy

India's "Look East" policy, first enunciated in 1992, had its genesis in the end of the Cold War, following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Having lost the Soviet economic and political support on which it had relied, the Indian government embarked on a program of free market restructuring at home and sought new markets and economic partners abroad. India also began to look for alternate energy sources after US-led Gulf War on Iraq in 1990-91 destabilised the Middle East.

The "Look East" policy was aimed at developing closer relations with the so-called economic "tigers" of South East Asia. In 1997, India became a full dialogue partner of the region's main grouping—the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). After coming to power in 1998, the BJP-led government in New Delhi continued the orientation to ASEAN despite the impact of the Asian financial crisis on the "tiger" economies.

At the ASEAN summit in Bali in October 2003, Prime Minister Vajpayee spelled out new initiatives for economic cooperation, including air and road links. To demonstrate the close relations he proposed an India-ASEAN motor rally from South East Asia through Burma to India. He outlined a program of free trade agreements with the countries of the region. The Indian prime minister signed a deal with Thailand to slash tariffs on a range of goods and offered closer intelligence and military cooperation.

In the lead-up to the summit, Vajpayee's foreign minister Yaswant Singh spelled out the strategy in a speech at Harvard University. "In the past, India's engagement with much of Asia, including South East and East Asia, was built on an idealistic conception of Asian brotherhood, based on shared experiences of colonialism and of cultural ties. The rhythm of the region today is determined, however, as much by trade, investment and production as by history and culture. That is what motivates our decade-old 'Look East' policy."

The fact that the speech was delivered in the US was significant. Under the Vajpayee government, India developed closer strategic and economic relations with Washington. Singh's remarks were a further assurance that there would be no return to the anti-imperialist rhetoric of the Cold War days when India played a leading role in the so-called Non-Aligned Movement. Clearly India was looking for the backing of Washington, which is also seeking to block China's links to ASEAN, as it pursued its aims of closer ties in South East Asia.

Since defeating the BJP in last year's election, the Congress-led government has made no sharp breaks with previous policies. The new foreign minister Natwar Singh told the India-ASEAN business summit in New Delhi last October that "Look East" was "more than a political slogan or a foreign policy orientation." At the ASEAN gathering the following month, he enthusiastically proposed exploring

the possibilities of a broad "Asian Economic Community" and signed an agreement for an ASEAN-India Partnership for Peace Progress and Shared Prosperity.

Part of the expected pay-off for New Delhi is economic. India has trade agreements with most ASEAN countries and the region currently accounts for \$US13 billion or about 10 percent of India's total foreign trade. New Delhi is hoping to take advantage of ASEAN plans for a single market and to nearly treble its trade with the region to \$30 billion by 2007.

But India faces competition from China, which is negotiating its own trade deal with ASEAN that will cut tariffs over the next five years beginning in mid-2005. A recent article in the Indian magazine *Frontline* noted that though India has improved its relationship with ASEAN, it is "quite modest in comparison" to China's which is "now close to \$50 billion and the target for 2005 is \$100 billion."

India is also seeking strategic relations in South East Asia. In its maritime doctrine released last April, the Indian navy shifted its doctrine from defending the country's coastline from rival Pakistan to declaring the entire Indian Ocean Region (IOR), from the Persian Gulf to the Malacca Straits, to be its "legitimate area of interest." India is in the process of acquiring nuclear submarines, the aircraft carrier Admiral Gorshkov and 16 MiG 29 K ground attack/interceptor aircraft as part of this strategy.

India wants a major role in policing the international sea-lanes through the Indian Ocean. New Delhi has already forged agreements with Malaysia and Indonesia regarding naval patrolling of the western end of the strategic Strait of Malacca. The Indian government exploited the December 26 tsunami disaster to flex its naval muscles in the region. In its largest-ever peacetime operation, the Indian navy dispatched 32 ships, 22 helicopters, 8 aircraft and 8,300 troops to distribute food, medicine and other relief supplies to Sri Lanka, Maldives and Indonesia.

India faces competition from China for influence in South East Asia, but the chief potential obstacle to its "Look East" strategy is Washington, rather than Beijing. During her recent visit to New Delhi, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice gave her Indian counterparts a rude lesson in US diplomacy when she opposed a planned gas pipeline from Iran to India via Pakistan. While Indian and US interests may coincide at present in South East Asia and in other regions, there is no guarantee that Washington's aggressive drive for world domination will not cut across other Indian plans in the future.

While India has strengthened its ties to Washington, sections of the Indian ruling elite are deeply concerned about the dangers of US militarism for their interests. As a result, New Delhi and Beijing, while vying for regional influence in Asia, are being drawn together by a mutual fear of Washington's aggressive policies. Significantly, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao is due to visit India this week to discuss a range of issues, including a free trade agreement.

Shwe Gas Pipeline Threatens Millions of Lives along Kaladan River

by Dale

The Burmese military Junta, State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), in collaboration with the multinational gas giants Daewoo, GAIL, KOGAS, and ONGC Videsh are continuing their plans to produce the natural gas located in Block A1 in the Bay of Bengal off the coast of Burma's Arakan State. Finalized plans of the natural gas' exportation have not been made as Burma, India and Bangladesh continue to negotiate the pipeline path.

The Kaladan River begins just north of Burma in the Manipur State of India, formed at the base of the Himalayas; it flows down through the Mizoram State of India and Chin and Arakan States of Burma, finally emptying into the Bay of Bengal.

Simply considering the Arakan State, if the proposed pipeline mirrors a history to that of the construction of the Yadana Pipeline in Burma, thousands will be displaced and subjected to severe human rights abuses such as forced labor, execution, and rape by the construction of the gas pipeline, according to gas activists.

The Kaladan River bed is home to the majority of the four million people living in Arakan State. The SPDC, making preparations for gas production and the pipeline has already displaced local peoples from Kyauk Taw Township and has cut off the Block A1 production site to local fishermen from Kyauk Phyu and Sittwe. Kyauk Taw Township is not alone in being in the path of the proposed pipeline, Sittwe, Pon Na Gyun and Pa Lat Wa Townships, and several villages including: Aa Myint Kyaint, Kyauk Site, Thae Tiet, Pauk La Wa, Aa Pauk Wa, Khaung Toet, Shwe Pyi, Thar Zay, Myauk Taung, Mar Lar, Tundma, Na-madar, and Main-let-wa are also along the river bed where the pipeline would be constructed.

Although the Block A1 production site is offshore and mostly local fishermen are affected, onshore the people are dependent upon fishing and farming the fertile land and waters of the Kaladan River Bed. Farmers cultivate varieties of bamboo, orchids, rice, sugar cane, potatoes, corn, peas, okra, peanuts, garlic, egg plant, chilis, oranges, bananas, mangos and hundreds of other subsistence and cash crops. According to EarthRights International (ERI), the SPDC soldiers have already confiscated land in Kyauk Taw Township to secure the area for the future pipeline. This has had a direct effect on the local people as subsistence farming was their means of survival; they are now refugees in Bangladesh.

From an ecocentric perspective the Kaladan River Bed is extremely valuable. Disrupting traditional farming practices, for example via land confiscation, endanger



Photo: Kaya&Susan

Most of the people along the Kaladan River practise farming for their livelihood in Arakan State. Tri-Nation proposed pipeline threatens livelihood of local people lives.

genetic biodiversity from traditional crop varieties saved in agricultural seeds and passed on through farmer's crops. Considering fauna, animals such as tigers, elephants, snakes, frogs, fish, and birds (just to name a few) reside along the purposed pipeline path. Lastly, several tree varieties such as teak, an endangered species, are also part of the Kaladan River Bed ecosystem.

Gas spills also affect human and environmental populations. The Kaladan is connected to several streams such as Main-lat-wa chaung and Main-chaung and as previously stated empties into the Bay of Bengal, the ecosystem the Kaladan River Bed is far reaching. When gas spills occur, the gas has a direct effect on the quality of the water and topsoil making it difficult for local peoples around to fish and grow crops

The construction of the Shwe Gas Pipeline directly contrasts notions of sustainable development as gas is a nonrenewable resource. The people of Burma, especially the Arakanese and Chin, have no democratic processes to convey how their environmental commons should be developed, the SPDC and gas giants are responsible for the pipeline construction and the outcomes thereof.

Dale (School for International Training)

News Diary



1. The UN, India, China, ASEAN, and natural gas and oil corporations need to get tough with Burma or the military junta will continue their crimes against humanity. As long as Burma's neighbors and other countries and corporations are greedy for Burmese resources, Burmese people will not know freedom. (July 4, Press-Esc)
2. According to sources at the military HQs in Rangoon, Burma's military junta, State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) chairman Gen Than Shwe and family are planning to amass all the country's major businesses into the hand of his powerful son-in-law U Teza. It is rumored that Teza is a gambling addict. (July 5, DVB)
3. Burma may import diesel fuel from India; however, Burma continues to ban foreign companies from exploring onshore oil blocks. India submitted bids for onshore exploration last month. (July 6, Asia Pulse)
4. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) is to build an all weather road from Burma to Vietnam, and will also connect to various other roads in the region as part of the GMS East-West Economic Corridor program. EarthRights International (ERI) expressed that although the road is proposed to increase economic activity and social mobility, the road will most likely be built by forced labor in Burma, will increase the trafficking of women and children from Burma, will increase diseases such as HIV/AIDS, and will be extremely destructive to the environment, particularly to endangered species in the region. (July 9, ERI)
5. The shareholders of Unocal have made no decision yet as to whether they will sale to Chevron or CNOOC. CNOOC is offering a higher bid than Chevron, however, Washington may sway the sale to keep the company based in America. (July 15, Reuters)
6. Aung San Suu Kyi was not able to attend Martyrs Day in Burma, the Day Burma celebrates her fathers assassination while serving his country. The SPDC stated she refused to attend. NLD members called for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi and all political prisoners. (July 19, AP)
7. Burma's military junta, State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) persists with systematic rape and sexual violence towards ethnic Mon women as young as 14 years old, according to the latest report by rights groups. (July 20, DVB)
8. Cooperation between the security forces of India and Burma in countering Indian ethnic groups based in Burma is poised to enter bold new phase, with the countries discussing joint counter-insurgency operations inside Burma. Armies from both India and Burma take refuge across each other's borders and in Bangladesh. (July 21, Asia Times)
9. As France prepares to celebrate Bastille Day on Thursday, 134 MPs have signed an Early Day Motion (EDM) calling on French oil giant TOTAL Oil to pull out of Burma. TOTAL Oil the fourth largest oil company in the UK- is the largest European investor in Burma. Horrific human rights abuse committed in the region of TOTAL's gas pipeline by pipeline security forces.(July 13, Burma Campaign UK)
10. The US has already renewed the ban on Burmese imports and President Bush is to sign a measure to ban members of the ruling junta from traveling to the United States. (July 21, San Antonio Express)
11. Former Burma Prime Minister Khin Nyunt received a 44-year suspended sentence after being convicted on eight charges including bribery and corruption. Khin Nyunt, who announced military-ruled Burma's roadmap to democracy" in 2003, was seen as a pragmatist favoring limited dialogue with detained opposition leader and Nobel peace recipient Aung San Suu Kyi. He was replaced by junta hardliner General Soe Win. (July 23, AFP)

Arakan Gas Research Team

K.Kyaw Khaing

Nyi Nyi Lwin

Dale (Volunteer)

Claudia (Volunteer)

Layout & Designed by

Herman

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Contributions of pictures, articles, news, or research papers are welcome. Any suggestions or advice to improve the quality of news and information sharing from you are most valuable to us.

India will continue talks with Bangladesh

June 25, 2005

New Delhi would continue talks with Bangladesh for trilateral agreement on the \$ 1 billion US 290-kilometerlong pipeline project from Burma western Arakan state to India through Bangladesh, even though India and Burma have agreed the initiative to find any viable alternative options to lay the gas pipeline directly between the two countries excluding Bangladesh, said Mr. Mani Shankar Aiyar, India's Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas.

Alternative options include building a pipeline that bypasses Bangladesh and selling natural gas to India in liquefied form, said a statement issued by Indian's Petroleum and Natural Gas Ministry.

Aiyar said that the possibility of taking the pipeline from Burma into Mizoram and onwards to Assam ending in west Bengal, a distance of 1400 km, would also be explored. This route is roughly double the length of the pipeline should it travel through Bangladesh, reported The Independent, Bangladesh.

India and Burma's agreement on alternative options have made at a meeting between Mr Aiyar and his Myanmar counterpart, Brigadier General Lun Thi, in New Delhi on July 6, due to a delay progress in resolving



Burma's Gen-Lun Thi (Left) and Mr. Aiyar(Right) have agreed to consider alternative options for selling natural gas from Shwe fields,block A1, in Arakan State to India at a meeting on July 6, New Delhi.

Photo: IB

the negotiation between India and Bangladesh.

Burma and India have agreed in the meeting that the laying of gas pipeline from Burma western Arakan State to India through Bangladesh would be the best option. The options are to be discussed by a trilateral technical committee in Yangon later this month.

The talks also covered India's decision to approve a loan of 20 million US\$ to upgrade the state-owned Thanlyn refinery as well as agreement on the sale of diesel from Assam, India to Burma.

Bangladesh did not participate in the New Delhi meeting as the invitation

from the India side reportedly came too late, according UNB.

Bangladesh early this year has set conditions for allowing the pipeline to pass through its territory, including an annual transit fee of US\$ 125 million and allowing Dhaka reduction of trade imbalance, providing corridor to Nepalese goods enabling them to reach Bangladesh ports and access to hydroelectric potential in Bhutan.

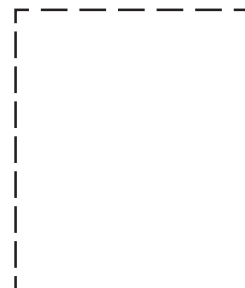
Mr. Aiyar has expressed his willingness to visit Bangladesh next month, a high official off the Indian high Commission yesterday informed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, according to The Independent, Bangladesh.

Arakan Gas Research Team

PO.Box 184, Mae Paing Post Office, Chaing Mai 50301 Thailand

E-mail: Shwenews@yahoo.com: Phone: 66 4 046 5813

Monthly Bulletin



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