

Unofficial Translation

**Central Committee
Kachin Special Region (2), Kachin Independence Organization**

Date: 6-7-2007

To

Your Excellency General Than Shwe
Chairperson of the State Peace and Development Council
Naypyidaw,
Union of Myanmar

Subject: Expression of concern regarding the construction of the Myitsone Hydroelectric power dam

We are respectfully expressing our concerns with respect to the above as follows:

According to the 6.5.07 issue of the *New Light of Myanmar* newspaper it has been discovered that a 3600MW hydroelectric power project is to be implemented at the confluence (known as Myitsone) of the N'Mai and Mali rivers where they become the Irrawaddy river.

Undoubtedly the government undertook fully comprehensive consideration prior to its decision to implement this project. However, we are making this presentation in order to alert the government of the concerns of the ethnic people from the Kachin State and the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO).

We believe that the Irrawaddy river, which results from the confluence of the N'Mai and Mali, is part of the natural heritage of the Union of Burma.

It is of great cultural importance that the Irrawaddy is the only river to flow unimpeded exclusively within the boundaries of our State from its source to the Andaman Sea.

We believe that the Irrawaddy River has played a vital historical role in Burma's renowned past civilization and economic development, and will continue to be a vital part of its future too.

There are known to be more than 70 towns with a population of more than 3 million people situated along the banks of the Irrawaddy between Myitkyina, the capital of Kachin State, and Hinthada district of the Irrawaddy division. They all depend on the river in one way or another.

Of the many essential facilities provided by the Irrawaddy River, some of the more pertinent are highlighted as follows:

Due to the Irrawaddy having adequately high fluvial flow all year round it can be used continuously for vessel transportation between Bamao town (Kachin State) to Yangon City.

The river vessels are able to carry significant volumes of cargo (i.e. 500 - 1, 000 tonnes from Bhamao to Mandalay; and 800-3000 tonnes between Mandalay and Yangon) . The reliability of river flow and therefore transportation ensures faster & more efficient movement of traffic with minimal technological disruption. This ensures smooth, fast and reliable cargo delivery which in turn assists the standardization of price control of goods. (*Ref: Harmonious Development between Yunnan and Myanmar selected Documents of the Debong Forum*)

Apart from the ease of communication and transportation afforded by the reliability of the Irrawaddy's natural fluvial flow down as far as the Delta area (a distance of approx. 1200 miles) this also allows the Delta to exist as one of the world biggest rice-producing areas.

The ports and other industries along the length of the Irrawaddy are a vital source of livelihood and services, including even basic needs, for millions of rural residents.

Further urgent concerns have also been raised by the people of Kachin State as follows:

Due to the richness of natural resources (both renewable and non-renewable) at the confluence of the N'Mai, Mali and Irrawaddy rivers, it is an extremely biodiverse region with a great variation of rare flora and fauna. In comparison an equivalently biodiverse area in Khakabo Razi was designated a National Park on 1.12.98 by the government. Construction of a dam would irrevocably destroy unique natural resources and biodiversity.

The construction of any dam across the Irrawaddy increased the likelihood of a greater concentration of water pollutants by reducing flow and oxygenation. Any change in flow will also have an effect on the local microclimate, and correspondingly contribute to negative effects of global climate change.

Additionally a dam would prevent essential movement of fish species which rely on being able to migrate upstream to breed, which would reduce or potentially extinguish populations. Other fish populations sensitive to water temperature and rate of fluvial flow are also likely to be affected by subsequent alteration of conditions above any dam. Increased algal growth (and corresponding reduced oxygenation) in more stagnant waters can induce toxic effects and suffocation for riverine species.

The creation of a dam lake will inundate currently productive farming land upstream and additionally cause increased soil erosion and silting of the river with all its negative impacts.

The most urgent concerns need to be considered of the people near the proposed site of the Myitson hydroelectric power station project who, already experiencing flooding of their lands intermittently, fear their increases occurrence. The unimaginably disastrous implications for local residents, of any dam collapsing, due to natural or human influences, perhaps need emphasizing, as they will be living in fear day by day.

The landscape at the confluence of N'Mai and Mali rivers has a deep and abiding cultural significance for the people of the Kachin State due to its natural iconic beauty and has been the subject of significant national pride over many generations.

Therefore your Excellency General taking into account the above-mentioned points we strongly entreat you to abandon plans for the Myitsone hydroelectric power project thereby alleviating the concerns of the Kachin State people, and also recognizing the deep-rooted importance of the area for the local people & biodiversity.

Respectfully,

Sd/--

Zawng Hkra

Chairman,

Central Committee

Kachin Special Region – 2 (KIO)

CC:

Ye Myint (Second Lieutenant General)

Department of Military affair Security, Naypyidaw

Major-General Ohn Myint

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Myitkyina