



## **China's Energy-security Plan Damages Indigenous Peoples' Lives in Burma**

*More Human Rights Abuses and Environmental Destruction at Grave Risk*

***Press release***                      ***www.arakanoilwatch.org***                      ***Date: 4 June 2010***

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China's Prime Minister Wen Jiabao's visit to Burma has cemented China's energy security through oil and gas deals and will boost the relationship between the two countries.

During his two-day visit, Prime Minister Wen Jiabao has signed 15 cooperation documents including oil and gas pipeline projects with Burma.

However, human rights abuses and environmental damages occurring due to China's investments in Burma are being completely neglected during the visit. As China's investment is growing, human rights abuses and environmental destruction from China's investment projects are becoming a big concern.

Most of China's investments are in the field of exploitation of Burma's natural resources such as oil and gas and mining and hydropower projects. These projects are reportedly leading to human rights abuses and environment destruction in Burma.

Jockai Khaing, director of Arakan Oil Watch (AOW) said, ***“Forced land confiscation, relocations and human rights abuses are currently taking place due to China's crude oil port project construction at Maday Island in Arakan State. China has started construction of the oil seaport without any protection for community livelihoods and environment. Human rights abuses and destruction of peoples' livelihoods are at grave risk along the pipeline route where the Chinese are currently carrying out the oil and gas pipeline project.”***

As part of China's oil and gas pipelines project in Burma, China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) started the construction of a seaport at Maday Island in October 2009 without any protection of community livelihoods and the environment. As a result, the livelihoods of the indigenous people and the environment of Maday Island have been heavily affected.

According to Arakan Oil Watch's findings, over 50 acres of rice fields belonging to indigenous peoples have been forcibly confiscated without any compensation. Villagers have been forced to sign a document which basically says that the villagers agree to give up their land and rice fields for the oil and gas pipeline project. The Confiscation Team consists of 3 representatives of Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise

(MOGE), A Chinese representative of CNPC, local police officers and 3 local staff members of Kyauk Phyu Township Land Department.

***“I refused to sign the confiscation document. I told them that I could not sign the document without getting any compensation and then a police officer grossly shouted at me and said he would arrest me immediately if I would not sign. So I had no other choice but signing the document,”*** said a father of two children from Maday Island in an interview with Arakan Oil Watch.

***“At the moment we are facing immense difficulties to make ends meet. All my rice fields have been confiscated by the Chinese and therefore I do not have anything to feed my family with,”*** he complained.

Since the beginning of the seaport construction in late October 2009, CNPC has conducted hundreds of mining operations on the riverbed around Maday Island. Due to the mining many fish have been killed and local fishermen have been facing difficulties of fishing.

The seaport project area is the most important fishing ground for fishing communities around Maday Island and for fishermen from entire Kyauk Phyu Township. Farming and fishing have been the main source of income for most of the villagers on the island for the past centuries.

**A fisherman said in an interview with AOW: “As mining ships and Navy boats are currently occupying the area, fishing has become more difficult each day. The sound of the mining is very loud and thousands of fish have died so far. On top of that, we are not allowed to catch the dead fish; this privilege only goes to the Chinese workers.”**

Expected to finish construction within two or three years, the seaport on Maday Island would be busier than China’s Shanghai seaport, as China’s crude oil tankers carrying oil from the Middle East and Africa are planning to rest in Maday Island. Carrying 12 million tons of crude oil per year, the US\$1.5 billion oil pipeline will travel 2,380 km starting from Maday Island to China’s Kunming city through central Burma.

The Shwe gas pipeline will extend further, from Kunming to Guizhou province and the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, running a total of 2,806 km. It is expected to transport 12 billion cubic meters of gas to China every year. According to China Business News, China and Burma decided to officially start the construction of the China-Burma oil and gas pipeline project in June this year during Prime Minister Wen’s visit.

***“In case of an accident to China’s oil tankers or the oil and gas pipeline, there is a grave risk to farmers, fishing flocks and Burma’s second largest mangrove forest at Arakan’s coastal line, which is located around the area of the crude oil port.***

***Will China take responsible for damages to lives and the environment incase of an oil spill in Burma?”*** Jockai Khaing, Director of AOW, added.

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