



Activists Working for Burma Meet with Senior Government Officials at the ADB AGM and Call on the ADB to Cease Providing Indirect Assistance to Burma's Junta for Salween River Dam and Asia Highway Project

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May 4, 2007. Kyoto, Japan. At the Asian Development Bank's 40th Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors (AGM) activists called on the Asia Development Bank (ADB) to cease providing technical assistance to Burma via the Greater Mekong Subregion program and seriously address concerns regarding the ADB's involvement with the military junta in Burma.

The representatives from groups working for Burma met with the Director of the Ministry of Finance of the Japanese government and requested the delegates to urge the ADB to tell the people of Burma how they are supporting the military generals and to explain why the ADB is making a political position by supporting the military regime of Burma. The Director of the Ministry of Finance of the Japanese government responded by saying he was "shocked to know the situation" in Burma and will look into the situation regarding ADB assistance to Burma's military generals.

Civil society representatives also met with the Director and Policy Advisor of the British government's Department for International Development. They raised the concerns about the ADB providing regional technical assistance grants to the military generals in Burma via the Greater Mekong Subregion Program. The UK and Japanese delegates responded by committing to follow-up with senior management at the ADB regarding these serious concerns.

During a meeting with the ADB President, civil society organizations submitted a collective petition letter to the ADB President. The letter included the specific concern that in the context of the almost six decades of war waged against the ethnic peoples of Burma, the development projects in Burma of the ADB promoted Greater Mekong Subregion Development Matrix, some of which are located in civil war zones, will surely lead to further abuses against local communities and the environment.

Although the ADB has not given any new loans to Burma since 1986, the ADB supports a range of regional projects which involve large-scale development projects in Burma. Two controversial projects include the Asian Highway component of the East-West Economic Corridor initiative, and the *Ta Sang* Dam on the Salween River of the proposed Mekong Power Grid. These projects will cause enormous human and environmental consequences.

In 2002, an ADB funded grant specifically identified the *Ta Sang* Dam project to be a part of the Mekong Power Grid. The *Ta Sang* Dam is slated to be built on the longest remaining free-flowing river in all of Southeast Asia in an area in Burma already suffering the atrocities of civil war.

The Asia Highway project of the East-West Economic Corridor will create a transportation corridor running the entire width of mainland Southeast Asia. According to a recent report published by the Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG), construction of the Asia Highway in Burma has already resulted in land confiscation, forced labor, and new roads used to deploy troops to further encroach into areas previously outside of the SPDC's control

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