

Dawei Deep Seaport and Special Economic Zone

Chronology of key events (from 2008-2013)¹

2008

19 May 2008

The governments of Thailand and Myanmar signed a MoU establishing the Dawei Deep Seaport and Special Economic Zone (DSEZ) Project which includes a deep sea port and a road link to Bangkok.

19 June 2008

The government of Myanmar and Italian-Thai Development PLC (ITD) signed a MoU to conduct a feasibility study for the Dawei Project.

2010

Local people started noticing construction going on in the area, and some villagers claimed that their lands were invaded or damaged without prior information or consent.

2 Nov 2010

Framework Agreement signed between ITD and MPA. A 60 year Build, Operate and Transfer Concession is granted to ITD to develop a deep seaport, an industrial estate (including heavy industries such as a steel mill, fertilizer plant, power plant and other utilities), road, rail and pipeline links, and a township.

2011

19 July 2011

The Karen National Union (KNU) stopped ITD's road construction to connect Dawei and Thailand after local communities alleged their lands were destroyed by the company and no compensation was given. This road will extend 160 kilometres and cut through 21 Karen villages.

15 December 2011

Dawei Development Association (DDA) held a press conference at Yangon to express concerns about the displacement of 32,279 local people, 21 schools, and 23 pagodas of 19 villages. DDA called on the government and developers to:

1. Adhere to green and sustainable development principles to protect the environment and local livelihoods in Dawei
2. Prioritize locals' desires when implementing the project
3. Conduct an EIA and SIA in accordance with international standards
4. Pursue a green and sustainable development that reflects the desires and interests of local communities.

2012

4 January 2012

DDA and locals organized a campaign against the proposed Coal-Fired Power Plant at Maungmakan beach and called for 'green' development, not environmentally destructive development.

5 January 2012

18 Thai civil society organizations held a press release to question Thai government's decision to take 52 billion baht of public money to invest in a deep sea port and industrial

¹ *Compiled by TERRA*

estate in Dawei, as well as expropriating land to build a national highway specially to supplement this project. Additionally, the group also questioned the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand (EGAT) on its plan to buy electricity from Myanmar, which may be too costly and threaten Thailand's national security in the future. Concerns over social and environmental impact were also presented.

7 January 2012

A bilateral meeting between Ministers of Myanmar and Thailand to discuss cooperation on the deep seaport project. During this meeting, DDA sent an open letter to the Prime Minister of Thailand to express concerns over environmental impacts and human rights. The group called on the Thai government to proceed with caution and understanding and to prioritize human rights in its approach.

9 January 2012

U Khin Maung Soe, Myanmar's Minister of Electric Power, stated in a press release in Yangon that the 4,000MW Coal-Fired Power Plant in Dawei would not be allowed due to its negative environmental impacts.

6 April 2012

Villagers in Thabyu Chaung, a Karen community that would be directly affected by the road construction connecting Dawei Industrial Estate to Thailand, expressed strong opposition to the project. They walked out during a meeting with Environmental Research Institute of Chulalongkorn University (ERIC), who came to collect data for an environmental assessment report (EA). Villagers doubted the team's neutrality as they arrived with ITD, the project developer. ITD was unable to give a clear answer on how it would compensate the people affected by the road construction. Locals were extremely dissatisfied with ITD's irresponsible attitude after its invasion of the community's property. What came afterward was a blockade on the road by the villagers to prohibit ITD to continue its road extension project as their losses were never addressed/compensated by the company. ITD called for a temporary stoppage of work in the area and left the site to work on other projects. The problem still remains unsolved.

2 August 2012

In Kalonehtar, villagers expressed their dissatisfaction with ITD's plan to construct a dam that would flood their village and farmlands while diverting the reserved water for industrial use. The villagers said they don't want to move.

18 August 2012

Sulak Sivaraksa, a prominent Thai scholar; Veerawat Dheeraprasart, Chairperson of Foundation for Ecological Recovery; and Penchom Sae-Tang, Director of Ecological Alert and Recovery – Thailand, at a press conference entitled "Stop Patronizing Dawei Project, Stop Public Debt Hikes", questioned the ethics and governance of the Thai government and related agencies on the Dawei Deep Seaport and Special Economic Zone development project. 42 civil society organizations endorsed the statement expressing disagreement with Thai government's intention to use public funding to support the project as it would not only increase public debt but also allow the investments into a country that still lacks strong laws and enforcement mechanisms to protect human rights and the environment. The group also called relevant government agencies to reveal all information to public.

September 2012

Transnational Institute (TNI), a human rights group, in cooperation with local communities, released a report, highlighting issues of land grabbing, unfair compensation, and forced resettlement in the Dawei project site. The number of affected individuals, both directly and indirectly, from land grabbing in Dawei is estimated as high as 500,000.

20 September 2012

Affected communities joined in a campaign to oppose DSEZ Project in Dawei. They criticized the projects for being highly polluting and not environmentally friendly. Kalonehtar villages, who will be affected by the dam project, asked President Thein Sein to express his allegiance to four regulations for foreign investors: 1) Protecting the interests of the people of Myanmar;

2) Protecting the dignity of the state; 3) Protecting sovereignty of the state; and 4) Foreign investment must be environmentally friendly.

Karen communities who are affected by the road-link construction organized a campaign activity, putting up opposition signs saying "Stop Building another Map Ta Phut in Dawei."

4 October 2012

Thailand's Minister of Industry revealed his meeting with the President of Japan External Trade Organization in Thailand, Setsuo Iuchi, confirming Japan's cooperation in the Dawei DSEZ Project among the three leading countries, with Thailand and Myanmar as the other two key players. He also revealed that Japan has expressed its willingness to provide financial support on projects relating to infrastructure.

28 October 2012

Locals in the Nabule area where the proposed deep seaport and Dawei Industrial Estate will be built said that initial constructions for these projects have deteriorated their livelihoods and prevented them to grow their crops in relevant seasons. A local group named 'Tavoyan Voice' stated that the DSEZ Project is only beneficial to businesses and authorities while locals have to suffer the impacts created by the project.

15 November 2012

Communities held another protest against the dam project in Kalonehtar as 182 households would be drowned under the planned new reservoir. Over 1,000 people would be relocated. The water would be diverted to feed the new industrial estate in Dawei. Locals stated that ITD asked for a negotiation to prevent any further delay on the project. On the day that ITD and officials arrived at the village to explain the resettlement plan, they were met with signs saying "No Dam" and "No Relocation."

22 November 2012

In response to a news report which quoted ITD's CEO as saying that the majority of the villagers had already been moved, the Tavoyan Voice, a local organization in Dawei, stated that no villager had moved out from their village at this time.

28 November 2012

Media stated that the EIA report of the deep sea port and Dawei Industrial Estate projects are expected to be completed by the beginning of 2013. Locals point out that while the projects started since 2010, ITD only began in September 2011 to hire TEAM Consulting Engineering and Management Co. Ltd., Panya Consultants Co. Ltd., and Environmental Research Institute of Chulalongkorn University (ERIC) to conduct environmental assessment studies in the three main project areas (which includes the deep seaport and DSEZ, the dam construction area in Kalonehtar, and the road links with Thailand). At present, no information on any of these EIA studies has been revealed to local communities.

2013

17 January 2013

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe made an official visit to Thailand. Thailand's Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra discussed the DSEZ project with Mr. Abe. *The Nation* reports that Japan has expressed an interest in taking part in the project to develop Dawei Port in Myanmar.

19 January 2013

Thailand's Transport Minister Chadchart Sittipunt expressed confidence that Japan was highly likely to invest in DSEZ project, adding that the extension of soft loans by the Japanese government to support the project's infrastructure would boost the project's feasibility, as the loans would help to lessen the interest burden during the initial period of the project.

25 January 2013

Cyclists and activists in Myanmar began a 10-day bicycle ride campaign from Yangon to the DSEZ project site in Dawei to raise public awareness of environmental issues of the project.

5 March 2013

DDA submitted a complaint letter to the National Human Rights Commission of Thailand in Bangkok, stating their concerns on violation of human rights and community rights related to DSEZ project. The group pointed out that the human rights violations have occurred by Thai companies and related agencies, for example, the violation of rights of indigenous and ethnic people – no rights to information and no proper consultation to local indigenous and ethnic people, and more than 32,000 local people are also facing the involuntary resettlement and unfair compensation.

28 March 2013

30 villagers from Cha Khan village in Htein Gyi tract, are pressured by the local government authorities to move out from their village to make way for the construction of the DSEZ project. The villagers have refused to move as they have been living in Cha Khan for decades and have made their living from fishing and salt farming for generations

12 May 2013

Local people affected by the construction of the Dawei road-link to Thailand refused to be involved in a 'public consultative meeting' organized by the Environmental Research Institute of Chulalongkorn University, the Thai agency hired by ITD to do the EIA report. The villagers accused that the EIA team has several times failed to provide information related to their study and failed to clarify critical issues such as compensation for damage to lands and crops. They also regarded the approach taken by the ITD and the Team, specifically, carrying out studies after construction had begun and properties were already damaged, as a clear demonstration of their 'lack of ethics'.

25 May 2013

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe began a visit to Myanmar.

DDA submitted a complaint letter to Japanese's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry, as well as the Governor of Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC), and the President of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), stating their concerns about violation of human rights and community rights related to DSEZ project. The group noted that Japan must be accountable for any environmental and social impacts and human rights violations caused by the project, if it decides to become involved in the project in any form, including investment or the provision of loans. The letter also highlights key obligations such as the compliance with human rights and international standards, especially the right of indigenous peoples to FPIC (Free, Prior and Informed Consent); information disclosure in timely and appropriate manner and participation of local people in meaningful way, in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of Resettlement Action Plan (RAP) as well as in the process of EIA; no coercion or intimidation on local people and community in the process of involuntary resettlement; avoidance of involuntary resettlement when feasible; no corruption; and respect for human rights in any kinds of project activities.

24 June 2013

The Dawei Watch Group has stated that residents in Dawei are planning to sue ITD for land loss incurred when ITD built a highway through the villagers' land in Yay Phyu Township. Also, according to a report submitted to the Special Court by farmland owners in the Talaing Yar District, 14 persons disputed the amount of compensation offered for losses to their farmland and livelihoods.

29 July 2013

U Thura Thauung Lwin, Chairman of Dawei Special Economic Zone Management Committee announced the effort to include Japan as a strategic partner for the DSEZ project with the purpose of obtaining clean coal technology to supply electricity. He mentioned that an invitation letter signed by ministers from Myanmar and Thailand was officially sent to Japan on 24 April to encourage Japan to invest in the DSEZ.

4 August 2013

Myanmar officials say they remain confident that Japan will play a major role in developing the DSEZ project. Japanese officials also said to the media that they are mulling several options to participate in Dawei. Japan External Trade Organisation (JETRO) Yangon executive managing director Masaki Takahara also said that Japan could share its expertise through planning and infrastructure development, while financing the project could also be considered. *"Contribution to the connectivity and development of this region is the task of Japan as one of the largest economies in the region,"* he said.

9 September 2013

Local villagers blocked a road at Thabyu Chaung village to protest against ITD, accusing the company of failing to keep its promise to compensate them for losses caused by the building of new roads for the DSEZ project. The group also issued a statement criticizing what it described as "unfair and non-transparent compensation" offered by ITD.

29 September 2013

Dawei residents call for halt to DSEZ project, claiming promised compensation has not been paid and local peoples' dissatisfaction is growing as their farms and gardens are being destroyed by the project's construction without their knowledge.

16 October 2013

Myanmar's *Eleven Media* reports that the officials from the Japanese government told a Myanmar-Japan-Thailand joint meeting that Japan is reconsidering its involvement in the DSEZ project. *"The Japanese government is interested in investing in the Dawei SEZ, but they are not making any decision yet. If the Japanese government wants to get involved in the SEZ, they have to use public funding. So they will explain the SEZ in Japan to any Japanese company that takes an interest,"* said Deputy Minister of Transport Han Sein, who is the chairperson of the Dawei SEZ scrutinizing committee.

21 November 2013

The Thai-Myanmar Joint Coordination Committee (JCC) met in Bangkok and approved a new framework agreement on DSEZ Project. Three MoUs were signed. The first was a contract between the Dawei Special Economic Zone Authority and DSEZ Development, which is a special purpose vehicle (SPV) jointly owned by Thailand and Myanmar on a 50:50 basis. The SPV will invite investors for the project. The second deal was a tripartite memorandum among ITD, the DSEZ Authority and the SPV, which determines the remaining operating rights of ITD before it transfers them to special purpose companies (SPCs). The third is an agreement terminating the existing concession of ITD to construct and manage the Dawei project. This concession right will be transferred to the SPV and put up for bids.

U Set Aung, Vice Governor of the Central Bank of Myanmar, said the meeting on the DSEZ Project was observed by representatives from Japan. The management committee also invited investors from Japan to give their proposals for the first-phase development in the Dawei project.

21 November 2013

Dawei villagers block the road between KM37-38 and seize 3 ITD vehicles as they said ITD has failed to compensate for their plantations that were destroyed since the company started the road construction in 2011.

22 November 2013

Mitsubishi announces that the company will team up with Electricity Generating (EGCO) and ITD to build a 7,000MW coal-fired power plant in Dawei, taking stakes of 30%, 50% and 20%. The total output capacity is equivalent of seven nuclear reactors. The first facility is slated to go into operation in 2015. The plan is to supply 3,000MW within the DSEZ and sell the rest 4,000 MW to Thailand. Local people have not received any official notification related to this plan.

25 November 2013

The Irrawaddy reports that Japan's government and private sector are taking a renewed interest in the project after previously appearing lukewarm to the proposition. "*Dawei Special Economic Zone [SEZ] is a very important project for the region,*" said Mr. Tadashi Maeda, managing executive officer of Japan Bank for International Co-operation (JBIC), a state-owned bank, speaking at a Rangoon business seminar staged by Japanese media company Nikkei.

4 December 2013

The DSEZ project is temporarily suspended. Thai and Myanmar workers face unemployment. Myanmar's Deputy Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement told *The Irrawaddy* that villagers from the six villages who will be displaced still have not received compensation and he has no idea who will be responsible for providing the rest of the compensation.

11 December 2013

DDA issued a press release prior to the Japan-ASEAN summit, calling on the Japanese government, development agencies and investors to refrain from investing in the DSEZ until international best practices are firmly in place. The group also urged that the Japanese investors must not invest in dirty industries that will harm local communities and the environment.

13-15 December 2013

Summit to mark 40 years of ties between Japan and ASEAN held in Tokyo. It was expected that Japan would announce its plan to invest in the Dawei SEZ project at this meeting. No information has been made public about the discussions on the DSEZ at this meeting, up to the time of going to press.