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Chronology of the Myitsone Dam at the Confluence of Rivers above Myitkyina

Sources: *New Light of Myanmar*, *Myanmar Times*, *Irrawaddy*, *Mizzzima*, *Weekly Eleven*, *The Voice*, *Open News*, *7 Day News*, *Kachin News*, *Damming the Irrawaddy*; also personal communications. 26 December 2011

This chronology incorporates very significant material related to 2002–2010, posted on the web by “ipea-editor” on 17 January 2011, down-loaded 26 October 2011. Efforts continue to contact that person/group to acknowledge their work. Note that quotations of statements here are probably translations. Corrections and additions to this chronology are welcome, the editors.

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| 2002 | Kansai Electric Power Company, Inc (KEPCO of Japan) builds a weather station in Tang Hpre (<i>Damming the Irrawaddy</i>). |
| February 2002 | The Ministry of Electric Power forms the Department of Hydroelectric Power (DOHP) (<i>Damming the Irrawaddy</i>). |
| January 2004 | Villagers from affected areas send a letter to the Kachin Consultative Body and Kachin ceasefire groups asking them to stop the Myitsone dam projects (<i>Damming the Irrawaddy</i>). KEPCO does research in dam area with agreement of DOHP. |
| 1 February 2004 | Villagers send a letter to the northern regional commander Kyaw Win asking him to halt the dam projects in Myitsone but he does not respond to them. |
| 24 October 2005 | A state electronic engineer informs the Northern Regional Commander Ohn Myint and chairman of the Kachin State peace and development council in Myitkyina about the camp near the dam site for 8 Chinese researchers from the Yunnan Machinery [Equipment] Export & Import Company (YMEC) and Kunming Hydropower Institute of Design. |
| 30 November 2005 | YMEC and Myanmar Ministry of Electric Power sign a Memorandum of Understanding in Kunming. |
| May 2006 | Heavy rain and snow run-runoff back up behind Washawng dam and break it apart, resulting in a sudden flood [see map]. |
| 1 June 2006 | Northern Regional Commander Ohn Myint informs the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) Relations Office, Special Region 2, and the National Democratic Army-Kachin (NDAK) Special Region 1, asking them to tell their subordinates that Suntac Technologies Co. Ltd has been employed by YEMC [Yunnan Machinery] company in Yunnan to survey and explore drilling projects. |

- July 2006 Heavy rains back up behind Chyingkrang dam (also spelled Kyein Karan] near Myitkyina, and then crack it and break it apart, washing away houses and killing 5 people. This dam was built by Kachin workers under strict military supervision between 1982–1993. [See map; also 20 September 2011 below for oral history details].
- August 2006 Suntac establishes an office in Tang Hpre village to map the terrain for YMEC, and an office in Washawng to transport machinery from China that it needs for mapping (*Damming the Irrawaddy*, 2007).
- December 2006 Signing of MoU on hydro-power-electricity between Ministry of Electric Power (1) and China Power Investment Corporation (CPI) involving Myitsone and Chibwe dams; first mapping, hydrology, and test drilling occurs in watershed.
- January 2007 Changjiang Design Institute sends research teams to Myitsone dam area to conduct drilling, inspection, and surveying the dam site.
- 14 March 2007 CPI's manager for the project planning department and the Changjiang Design Institute negotiate with Suntac Company, in order to conduct topographical aerial photography of the site.
- 19 March 2007 AsiaWorld Company, Changjiang Design Institute, and CPI hold their first liaison meeting via telephone.
- 28 March 2007 CPI holds a meeting in Beijing to handle potential problems that might arise from both the Myanmar hydropower project and the Vietnam thermo-power project.
- May 2007 The Myanmar and Chinese governments reach an “agreement in principle” to build seven dams along the May-Hka and Mali-Hka Rivers and at their Myitsone confluence.
- 6 May 2007 The “Ground Breaking Ceremony” for the Myitsone dam and Chi Bwe dam is held. CPI Vice President, Shi Chengliang, Changjiang Institute of Surveying, Planning, Design and Research (CISPDR) Project Manager Niu Xinqiang, Chairman of Asia World Htun Myint, Minister of Electric Power (1) Zaw Min, Northern Regional Commander Ohn Myint, and others attend the ceremony (*New Light of Myanmar*, 6 May 2007).
- 21 May 2007 12 Kachin leaders send an appeal letter to Senior General Than Shwe to stop construction of the dam at Myitsone.
- 21 May 2007 CPI signs a cooperation agreement with China Southern Power Grid Company (CSG) for the hydropower projects in the May Hka, Mali Hka, and Ayeyawady River basin areas.

- 6 July 2007 KIO Special Region 2, HQ Committee Chairman Zawng Hra sends a letter to Senior General Than Shwe to stop the dam project in Myitsone confluence area.
- 11 July 2007 KIO Special Region 2 sends a letter to Chinese authorities to stop the confluence dam projects and to build other dam projects in different parts of the Kachin State.
- October 2007 Kachin Development Networking Group (KDNG) releases *Damming the Irrawaddy* to highlight the negative impacts of the Myitsone dam projects.
- December 2007 Changjiang Survey, Planning, Design, and Research Ltd begin feasibility survey to prepare for the full environmental impact study.
- March–June 2008 Changjiang Ltd, in cooperation with Biodiversity and Nature Conservation Association (BANCA) of Yangon, negotiate Terms of Reference of full impact study with principal investors and governments.
- 2–3 May 2008 Cyclone Nargis hits delta and central area of Myanmar, creating chaos, and leaves a death toll of more than 140,000 people. A consortium is established of ASEAN, Government of Myanmar and foreign donors to coordinate the aid and recovery efforts, using new administrative arrangements. Soon multidisciplinary teams are collecting data on the cyclone’s socio-economic impact on the ground, impacts that are openly discussed. Media treatments of the cyclone’s impact highlight the lack of preparation for emergencies like this and the need to better understand climate change.
- 1 April 2009 Project engineer Shi Su Byan of CPI and Minister of Energy Zhang Guobao of China meet with the Deputy Minister of Electric Power [1] Myo Myint, to discuss the implementation of the hydropower project at Myitsone.
- 16 June 2009 Myanmar Ambassador in Beijing Thein Lwin and President of CPI Lu Qizhou sign the Memorandum of Agreement “for the development, operation and transfer of the Hydropower Projects in May Hka, Mali Hka and upstream of Ayeyawady-Myitsone River Basins” (*New Light of Myanmar*, 21 June 2009).
- 14 July 2009 The Northern Regional Commander sends a formal letter to NDAK and KIO special region 2 and tells them that CPI is going to survey the land in the confluence dam area from July 31 to August 19, and says the KIO and NDAK should inform their subordinates about this.
- 19 July 2009 Vice Senior General Maung Aye visits the Myitsone dam project area.

- 5 August 2009 The Chairman of Myitkyina Township and other government officials meet with affected villagers and tell them that they will have to relocate and that they will be compensated.
- 17 August 2009 Htain Shung District of Yunnan Government external relations department sends a formal letter requesting the KIO to allow Shi Pe Exploration and Design College, (employed by the CPI) to do their exploration drilling in KIO special region 2 to collect geological samples.
- 20 September 2009 The Northern Regional Commander Maj- Gen Soe Win, Minister for Electric Power (1) Col Zaw Min, Minister for Communications, Posts and Telegraphs Brig-Gen Thein Zaw, Minister for Commerce Brig-Gen Tin Naing Thein and departmental heads, Vice President Zhang Xiaolu of China Power Investment Corporation (CPI) and party from China hold a meeting in Tang Hpre to discuss about Myitsone hydropower projects (*New Light of Myanmar*, 22 September 2009).
- September 2009 Government officials go to affected households in the dam zone to require people sign an agreement and leave their homes.
- 9 October 2009 Government officials including the northern regional commander show models of houses for new villages to the villagers in Tang Hpre. At the meeting, Tang Hpre Village Women's Group appeals to the government officials to stop the dam project.
- 27 October 2009 Kachin Development Networking Group (KDNG) released its second report *Resisting the Flood*, to add to its first one *Damming the Irrawaddy* in 2007.
- October 2009 Completion of first version of the Environmental Impact Assessment, involving 100 researchers in the Chinese and Myanmar (BANCA) teams; report shows photos of Chinese and Myanmar researchers working together in the river bed and watershed, recording samples and analyzing data.
- December 2009 Signing of agreement (between same parties as 2006) on Myitsone dam; to be constructed at the confluence of Mali Hka and May Hka Rivers, 45 kms upstream from Myitkyina, with a potential generating capacity of 6000 Mw. AsiaWorld Myanmar is reported to be named as executing general contractor, and a division of profit from the project is reported as 10% for brokers' fees, 20% for Myanmar Ministry of Electrical Power (1), 70% for China Power Investment Corporation.

- 2009–2010 Pre-construction work begins in dry season for a large capacity cascade-design dam. Capital-intensive high pressure hydraulic gold mining camps are seen along the bank upstream and downstream from Myitkyina (no longer small run-of-the-river mercury-based panning systems); gold price in Yangon and Kunming USD 1,500/ounce.
- 13 January 2010 The Minister of Electric Power (2) Maj-Gen Khin Maung Myint and General Manager Zhang Guolai of Sinohydro Corporation Limited discuss power grid and sub-power station projects at meeting in Naypyidaw (*New Light of Myanmar*, 14 January 2010).
- 9 February 2010 Vice President Zhang Xiaolu of China Power Investment Corporation (CPI) meets with the Minister of Electric Power (1) Zaw Min in Naypyidaw (*New Light of Myanmar*, 10 February 2010).
- 17 April 2010 A series of small bomb blasts occur near the dam sites. Four bombs explode in Asia World Company building at Myitsone dam projects site, eight bombs explode in Tang Hpre village, and two bombs explode in Chyingkrang village, one Chinese worker is injured.
- 28 May 2010 Mazup village population is relocated from the to-be-submerged area to Lungga Zup village, 25 kms from Myitkyina.
- 10 June 2010 Villagers from Tang Hpre send a letter to Overseas Kachin Baptist Church (in the United States), to ask them to help deal with the forced relocation and unfair compensation of villagers.
- June 2010 Three villages including Dawng Pan, Sut Ngai Yang and Shoi Ba villages are relocated to one new village called Lungga Zup.
- 14 June 2010 The *Kachin News Group* reports that relocated Myitsone villagers at Longga Zup [see above] face hardships including poor health care, poor livelihood opportunities, and polluted water and a lot of mosquitoes.
- 5 July 2010 SPDC Secretary #1 General Tin Aung Myint Oo meets with President Lu Qizhou of CPI while on a visit to Beijing (*New Light of Myanmar*, 31 July 2010).
- 22 July 2010 Senior retired UN administrator and economist U Myint meets with Howa Duwa Zau Gam in Myitkyina to discuss Myitsone dam.

- 23 September 2010 Madame Zhang Xiaolu, Vice President of CPI and its Engineer General Xia Zhong, and Li Guanghua, General Manager of CPI Yunnan International Power Investment Company discuss the dam project with Minister Zaw Min of Electric Power [1] in Naypyidaw (*New Light of Myanmar*, 25 September 2010).
- 24 September 2010 The Upstream Ayeyawady Confluence Basin Hydropower Co Ltd receives work permits, company registration certificates, legal opinions, and concession rights for the Myitsone hydropower project from officials in Naypyidaw. Vice President Zhang Xiaolu of the Upstream Ayeyawady Confluence Basin Hydropower Co Ltd. attended the ceremony (*New Light of Myanmar*, 24 September 2010).
- 5 October 2010 General Myint Soe visits Kachin State to observe the Myitsone dam construction (*New Light of Myanmar*, 7 October 2010).
- November 2010 National parliamentary election completed and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is released from house arrest in Yangon.
- 21 December 2010 The president of CPI Yunnan; Zaw Min, Minister of Electric Power (1); Khin Maung Myint, Minister of Electric Power (2); Brig Gen. Zeyar Aung; Northern Regional Commander Thein Zaw, Minister of Communications, Posts and Telegraph, the Managing Director of AsiaWorld Company – all attend the inaugural ceremony of new Aung Myin Tha San Pya village near the Stillwell Road and new bridges. They all open a hospital at Aung Myin Tha San Pya village, near Tang Hpre (*New Light of Myanmar*, 24 December 2010).
- December 2010 Independent study shows marked increase during 2010 (compared to same months of 2009) of number of Myanmar media stories about active groups, their events, and about environmental issues [eg banning of plastic bags, tree planting campaigns, awareness of rivers, climate change, etc]; from a few in 2009 to over ten stories in 2010.
- January 2011 Photo of hydraulic gold mining on Ayeyawady River upstream from Myitkyina appears in *Eleven Weekly* on page three [approved by Censor Board].
- February 2011 Seminar in Yangon on gold extraction (from river beds and river banks) and refining and marketing attracts 600 participants; gold price is USD 1,600/ounce.
- March 2011 KIO sends open letter expressing its concerns about Myitsone dam to officials in Beijing. Kachin groups also express concern about the large number of Chinese gold miners camped along the river.

- 20 April 2011 National Commission for Environmental Affairs is re-named “National Environmental Conservation Committee”.
- June 2011 Temporary suspension of the Myitsone dam construction, coinciding with the risks of snowmelt and rainy season water rise. Insecurity also increases throughout Kachin State following armed confrontation beginning 8/9 June between KIA and the Army near the site for the Dapein dam near Bhamo [also spelled Taping]. The context of fighting was disagreement between KIO and Army about the future of KIO-controlled areas. Dam construction pauses for the next eight weeks due to insecurity and high water, many workers depart. Army troop reinforcements soon move to Myitkyina, and the ceasefire signed in 1994 is understood to be over. Emissaries/intermediaries are sent for discussions, punctuated by sporadic fighting.
- July 2011 Appearance of Changjiang/BANCA environmental impact assessment (EIA) on the “Burma Rivers Network” website in Thailand, although the document had already been circulating and read by people inside Myanmar for preceding months.
- August 2011 Officials talk about the re-start of dam construction work.
- 9 August 2011 Article attributed to “staff member of MEPE”, titled “Perpetual material heritage relayed with good volition” appears in *New Light of Myanmar*, 10 August 2011; author Kyaw Min Lu publishes [on same day] “We also love Ayeyawady” in *New Light of Myanmar*; the author says “I wish they would view the Myitsone Dam reasonably.”
- 11 August 2011 Daw Aung San Suu Kyi writes an open letter in her private capacity asking that more thought and study take place before the dam goes ahead.
- 17 August 2011 *Eleven Media* CEO Than Htut Aung reports on a Think Tank Group meeting where experts were invited to express their own assessments of the EAI and the dam, and also reviews the two *New Light* articles on 9 and 10 August, including the skeptical views of ‘veteran journalist’ Ludu U Sein Win.
- 17 August 2011 President Thein Sein speaks to business and social organization leaders, explains economic problems faced by the country and describes what reforms are planned to address them, while hinting at bureaucratic resistance to change. He invites Burmese diaspora to return to Myanmar.
- 5 September 2011 Hluttaw [parliament] approves President’s recommendation to change name of Ministry of Forests to “Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry.”

- 10 September 2011 Panel in Yangon on Myitsone Dam, widely attended, included Tun Lwin, retired Director General of Meteorology, Soe Nyunt chair of Birds & Nature Society and U Ohn, secretary general of FREDa, skepticism about the whole EIA process was expressed. Critical story about dam appears in *Eleven Weekly* newspaper.
- 11 September 2011 Cabinet ministers assert determination to re-start construction, including Information & Culture, Industrial Development; Minister Zaw Min of Electric Power (1) states to the press his determination not to change his course, saying “some organizations are trying to side track the project with environmental reasons but it is so clear they are just trying to block our country’s economy. We don’t need to listen to the comments of these groups” (*Myanmar Times*, 19 September 2011).
- 16 September 2011 Economic Advisor to President, U Myint, sends open letter to Burmese and English language media including BBC, *Voice of America*, *Democratic Voice of Burma*, *Irrawaddy magazine*, *Mizzima News*, [and others] stating “I strongly feel that we should conduct an objective and independent economic and social impact analysis of the Myitsone dam Project – its impact on the whole length of the Irrawaddy River from source to sea. It should be done by an organization like the Mekong River Commission that is held in high esteem by all of us for its competence and integrity. Only after such investigation and careful review of the results by all concerned, should a decision be taken whether we should proceed further with the project or not. The possibility of a suitable alternative, such as building two small dams upstream that will yield the same amount of electricity could also be considered. Such an alternative, while bringing the same economic benefits, will have much less adverse economic, social, political and emotional impacts on the people of Myanmar than locating dam at the Myitsone site.”
 “I said all this a year ago as an academic and Myanmar national. I continue to hold these views in my new role as Chief of the Economic Advisory Unit in the President’s office. The only difference is that I can now submit these views to the high authorities of Myanmar. I have done it. U Myint.”

- 17 September 2011 Workshop in Naypyidaw, attended by Minister Zaw Min (Electric Power), Minister Win Tun (Environmental Conservation and Forestry), Minister Soe Thein for Industry (1) and (2) and chair of Myanmar Industrial Development Committee, also others like Htay Oo (retired major general and former minister, and now Secretary General of Union Solidarity & Development Party, USDP) – some voices call for a review of project. Minister Zaw Min is reported to have said at this meeting that he himself wrote the 10 August article “We also love the Ayeyawady” and published it under a pseudonym in *The New Light of Myanmar*.
- 17 September 2011 At the same Naypyidaw workshop Li Guanhua chairman of CPI Yunnan presents a paper titled “Ayeyarwady Hydropower Projects are Strategic for Myanmar Electrical Power Industry”. Chair of BANCA Tin Hla reads a paper called “Effects on Natural Environment and Society” in which he conveys the framework and methodology for the assessment made by BANCA during the Myitsone EIA.
- 18 September 2011 Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry announces review of previous EIA reports on Myitsone dam.
- 19–26 September 2011 A variety of public gatherings occurs in Yangon to debate the dam project and to advocate its termination; there is frequent reference to the fact that this river rises in Myanmar, saying it is uniquely “ours”: for example – “Sketch of a River” exhibition involving artists (attended by Daw Suu Kyi), a symposium on 24 September (involving the same experts as on 10 September) concerning the river at “Birds and Nature Society”, and other events which preceded these.
- 20 September 2011 Howa Duwa Zau Gam, respected senior Kachin leader, speaks on the record to *Mizzzima* about floods in 2004*, recalling the Kachin term ‘*mawro*’ for landslides and mudslides: “the Kyeinkaran dam was cracked in 6 places and then finally broke [...] The torrents were so large it was like a huge waterfall and it uprooted giant trees. Within a short time the houses of Tanparae** [also spelled Tang Hpre, see 2006] were swept away by the water [...] If it had been a normal flood we could have run. But when the dam broke we had no time to run.” Source of interview, *Mizzzima News*, 20 September 2011.
- 23 September 2011 At a workshop in Yangon, a number of environmentalists discuss sending a letter of caution about the dam to President Thein Sein (*Myanmar Times*, 3 October 2011).

- 30 September 2011 President Thein Sein announces suspension of Myitsone Dam “in the time of our government”, citing the adverse ecological consequences, hydrological risk, displacement of up to 20,000 people, and loss of their livelihoods. However six other planned dams involving China Power Investments will continue in Kachin State, in his words spoken later, “not failing to honour what one friend should do for another.”
- 30 September 2011 Not all government supporters understand or agree with the dam suspension, e.g., Secretary General of USDP and member of Hluttaw for Hinthada Htay Oo is quoted as saying “I have nothing to say about the president’s letter. I don’t know how it will affect the fighting in Kachin State. I don’t think the dam is the reason for the conflict. I think there might be some other reasons. I think there will be repercussions as a result of today’s announcement” (*Myanmar Times*, 3 October 2011).
- 1 & 2 October 2011 China’s ambassador to Nay Pyi Daw Li Junhua tours “other project sites” involving China; he opens Myanmar–China oil and gas pipeline originating at Kyaukphyu on the Bay of Bengal, and he tours Monywa Copper (now owned by Myanmar Wanbao Copper Mining Ltd, subsidiary of North China Industries Corporation (well known as “Norinco”, a major civil engineering and explosives/blasting company).
- 4 October 2011 Lu Qizhou, President of CPI, remarked to reporter that he was surprised to learn about suspension of Myitsone dam project through media reports. Lu said “the two countries had already secured loans of USD 20 billion to pay for the seven dam [...] project.”
- 10 October 2011 Myanmar Foreign Minister Wunna Maung Lwin travels to meet with China’s Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi and Vice President Xi Jinping, intending “to reach an agreement” on the dam suspension. Compensation for contract cancellation is discussed. Vice President Tin Aung Myint Oo also travelled to Guanxi to meet Premier Wen Jiabao for the same purpose, at this time.
- 17 October 2011 IMF Mission arrived at Myanmar government’s invitation to discuss economic reforms, including exchange rate consolidation.
- 24 October 2011 Signing of USD 500 m line of credit with India for infrastructure projects.

- 26 October 2011 Senior Japanese hydro-electricity experts meet deputy minister and senior officials of Myanmar Electric Power (1), this “friendship delegation” discusses resumption of Japanese Official Development Assistance (suspended 12 years before – 1999). Note that Kansai Electric Power Corporation of Japan was involved in earliest plans for the dam and built a meteorological station at the confluence in 2002–2003.
- 28 October 2011 Chinese workers are seen leaving the dam site and returning toward the border. Fighting between KIO and Myanmar forces in area of dams continues.

Note: Ministry of Electric Power (1) is responsible for generating electrical power and Ministry of Electric Power (2) is responsible for distributing electricity.

Col Zaw Min became the Minister of the Ministry of Electric Power (1) in May 2006.

* The Duwa recalled 2004 but the historic record shows that this flood occurred and the dam was destroyed in July 2006, see *Damming the Irrawaddy*, p.35.

** The village affected was, according to the historic record, probably Chyingkrang, not Tang Hpre.

Companies, Corporations, and Organizations Associated with Myitsone Dam

Sources: *Damming the Irrawaddy*, Kachin Development Networking Group, 2007, news reports, and other sources.

China

1. China Power Investment Corporation (CPI); CPI Yunnan International Power Investment Co., Ltd.; Upstream Ayeyawady Confluence Basin Hydropower Co. Ltd.
2. Yunnan Machinery [Equipment] Export & Import Company (YMEC), [was also building a dam in Vietnam during this period]
3. Kunming Hydropower Institute of Design
4. Changjiang Design Institute; Changjiang Institute of Surveying, Planning, Design and Research (CISPDR); has planned and designed dams in countries like Ethiopia, Colombia, Afghanistan, etc.

5. China Southern Power Grid (CSG), consortium of five electricity distribution companies in the five southern provinces of China, including Yunnan. [CGS has a strategic partnership with CPI]
6. Shi Pe Exploration and Design College

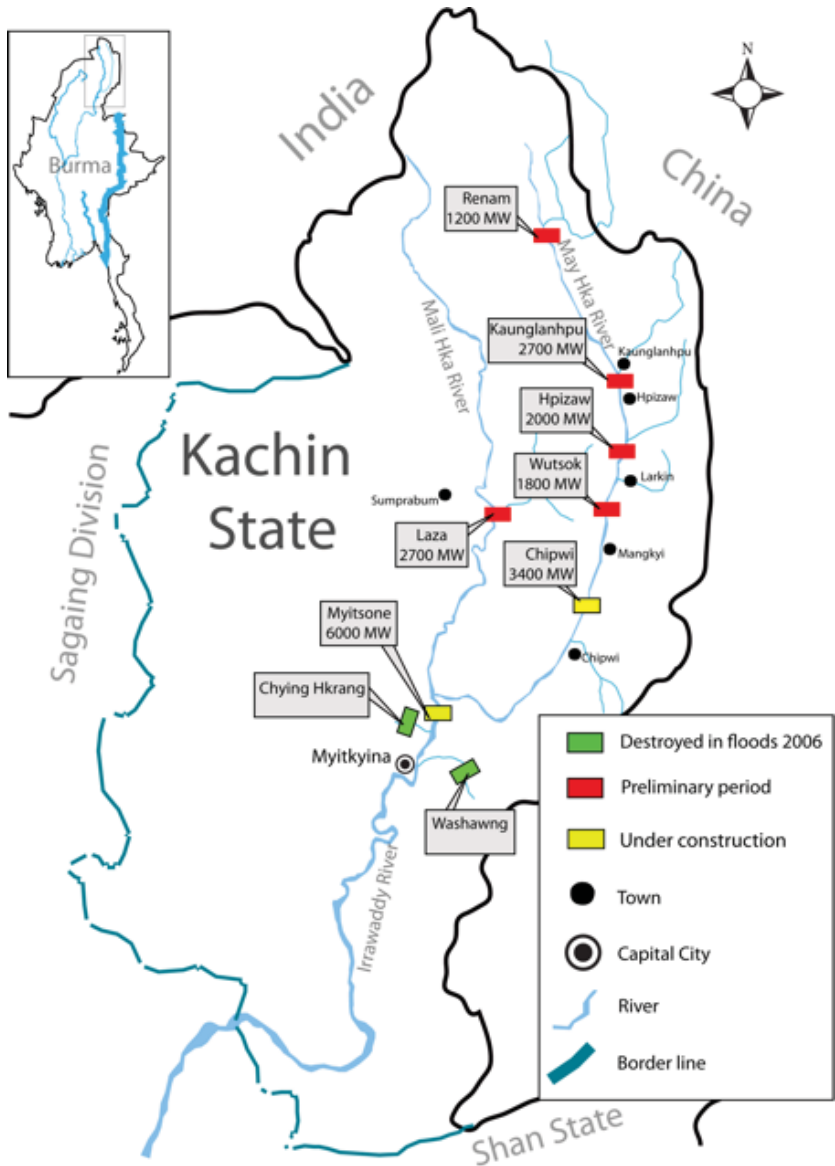
Myanmar

1. Suntac Technologies Co. Ltd., specializes in surveying and mapping [employed by YEMC]; CPI's manager of project planning department and Changiang Design Institute negotiates with and through SunTec Company of Yangon
2. Asia World Company, Yangon, widely used in general construction throughout Myanmar, including major highway projects
3. Ministry of Electric Power (1), Naypyidaw
4. Biodiversity and Nature Conservation Association, Yangon

Japan

1. Kansai Electric Power Company, Incorporated (KEPCO)

Map of Kachin State dams



Source: Kachin Development Networking Group, December 2011.