

Press release by Action for Shan State Rivers

Hundreds of villagers hold prayer ceremony against planned coal mine and power plant in Mong Kok, eastern Shan State

October 22, 2019

Today, hundreds of local residents held a prayer ceremony at Tad Sao Woonchum Temple (Tad Jai Mong) in Mong Kok, Mong Hsat township, eastern Shan State, to stop Thai and Burmese companies from starting a giant coal mining project which will devastate the environment and poison the Kok River.

On July 11, 2019, Sahakol Equipment Co. Ltd (SQ) Company from Thailand and Golden Lake Co. Ltd from Burma signed an MOU for a 28-year coal mining concession in Mong Kok with an expected total revenue of 27 billion baht (USD 890 million).

Both parties spent the first batch of 300 million baht (USD 10 million) to set up a joint venture, Mai Khot Coal, in which SQ holds 70% and Golden Lake 30%. The company plans to mine 300,000 tons of coal a year, mainly for Thailand, and to build a 600 megawatt coal-fired power plant for distribution to Thailand's power grid.

On September 8, eight Thai staff arrived in Mong Hsat and began preparing the mining site, but when villagers came and told them they opposed the project due to impacts on their lands, rivers and homes, the Thai staff returned to Tachilek the next day.

On October 17, 2019, company representatives came back to Mong Kok and held a meeting with villagers at Kyaung Wan Weing temple from 3 pm to 5 pm. They told villagers that they would only do "testing" of coal first, starting on October 25, 2019, and would mine an area of 3,200 acres.

The Mong Kok villagers are therefore holding the prayer ceremony today to call on the companies to stop all mining activities. The Tad Sao Woonchum temple lies beside the Kok River, and was founded in 2016 by the renowned Ven. Saokhuba Woonchum, in order to protect the area from harm.

Mong Kok lies in a pristine valley about 40 kilometers north of the Thai border in the mountains of eastern Shan State, near the source of the Kok river, which sustains countless communities downstream, including in Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai provinces of northern Thailand.

Mong Kok is home to 2,500 Shan, Lahu and Akha farmers, many of whom will have to move once mining begins. Three Burma Army bases surround the Mong Kok valley, securing the mining site.

The Italian-Thai Development Company gained a concession to mine lignite in Mong Kok in 2008, but halted the project in 2011 due to strong opposition from communities in Shan State and in northern Thailand.

"We are praying today to ward off harm and keep the coal in the ground. If it is dug up, it will destroy our lands, forests and rivers," said a Mong Kok villager.

Contact

Sai Khur Hseng	+95 98-893-712-91	(Shan, Burmese, English)
Nang Charm Tong	+66 87 658 9551	(Shan, Thai, English)
Nang Horm	+66 82 189 0684	(Thai, Shan)
Sai Hor Hseng	+66 63-389-5088	(Shan, English)