

June 28, 2022 | Myanmar

**Petronas, PTTEP, ENEOS, Mitsubishi Corp & Japan Gov
irresponsibly exiting Yetagun gas project
*Junta appointing Gulf Petroleum Myanmar as new operator***

The Myanmar military junta has appointed Gulf Petroleum Myanmar (GPM) as operator of the Yetagun gas project, according to a Justice For Myanmar source with knowledge of the deal, and reporting from [Myanmar Now](#).

The irresponsible divestment of Petronas and their partners will provide the Myanmar military junta with a continuing source of revenue, and heightens environmental risks from the decommissioning of the gas field, which is near depletion.

Petronas is the exiting operator of the Yetagun gas project, under a partnership with PTTEP and the ENEOS consolidated subsidiary, Nippon Oil Exploration (Myanmar). Other investors in Nippon Oil are the Japanese Government and Mitsubishi Corporation.

Friends of the Earth Japan, Justice For Myanmar and Mekong Watch have repeatedly called on Yetagun gas project investors to responsibly exit. This must involve taking appropriate steps to close the field in a way that would ensure future revenues do not flow to the Myanmar military, and that continued human rights and environmental impacts are avoided.

Consistent calls by civil society to sanction the military controlled Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise (MOGE) have also gone ignored. To date, only the EU has imposed any sanctions on MOGE.

Who is Gulf Petroleum Myanmar?

GPM is a private oil and gas company backed by the Thai tycoon Chatchai Yenbamroong, who was an executive in the telephone directory business of former Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra and an advisor to former Prime Minister Chavalit Yongchaiyudh.

Yenbamroong's business links to the Myanmar military started as early as 1995, when he received a ten-year licence from the military controlled Myanmar Posts and Telecommunications to publish the Myanmar Yellow Pages.

GPM is part of the Thailand-based Northern Gulf Petroleum group. Northern Gulf Petroleum is structured through shell companies in Bermuda, according to the GPM [website](#), and has a holding company in Singapore. Chatchai Yenbamroong and Northern Gulf Petroleum have also established offshore companies in the British Virgin Islands, according to the [Offshore Leaks](#) database of the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists.

Bermuda, the British Virgin Islands and Singapore are corporate tax havens.

Northern Gulf Petroleum was established in 2004 to bid in the 19th round of oil exploration and production concessions during the Thaksin administration, Thai media has reported. The company won concessions despite Northern Gulf Petroleum's lack of qualifications, awarded after Thaksin was deposed in a military coup in 2006. Yenbamroong has also invested in oil and mining companies in Canada and Australia.

GPM's chair is Kyaw Kyaw Hlaing, who is the chair and director of [SMART Group of Companies](#). It was first established in 1994, under Myanmar's former dictatorship, servicing the military controlled petroleum industry. A second GPM director, Zarni Swe, is a director in subsidiaries of SMART Group of Companies.

GPM director Ni Lwin Soe serves on the board of a number of Yenbamroong's companies, including Thaisat Global's Myanmar unit, Northern Gulf Petroleum Myanmar Limited, and Myanmar Gulf LNG Company Limited.

On May 14, 2022, the illegitimate junta launched an [invitation for bids](#) for an operator and shareholder in the Yetagun Project with a May 20 deadline, in a rush to replace Petronas.

Other bidders included a company linked to the crony [Shwe Byain Phyu](#) group.

An industry source disclosed to Justice For Myanmar that GPM began taking over the project on May 31. Petronas is to complete the handover to GPM after the completion of its Acid Gas Removal Unit (AGRU) project. Petronas previously had a sales purchase agreement with GPM.

GPM did not respond to questions from Justice For Myanmar regarding the resumption of operations, contract terms and whether they will be working with any joint operators.

Justice For Myanmar spokesperson Yadanar Maung says: "Gulf Petroleum Myanmar's takeover of the Yetagun gas project ensures the continued flow of funds to the Myanmar military junta, a terrorist organisation that commits war crimes and crimes against humanity with total impunity.

"Gulf Petroleum Myanmar and its directors and shareholders must be held accountable for aiding and abetting the military's crimes.

"Their entry is enabled by the failure of the US, Japan and other governments to sanction the Myanmar military controlled Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise.

"We call for urgent and coordinated sanctions to block the junta's access to oil and gas revenues.

"Petronas, PTTEP and Nippon Oil are responsible for the human rights and environmental impacts of their disengagement from the Yetagun gas project.

"They must disclose their human rights and environmental due diligence, consult with the National Unity Government, civil society and affected communities, and remedy negative impacts."

More information:

See our web feature, [Leaked documents show Min Aung Hlaing personally concerned over oil and gas payments](#).

See our web feature, [How oil and gas majors bankroll the Myanmar military](#).

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Justice For Myanmar, a group of covert activists campaigning for justice and accountability for the people of Myanmar, is calling for an end to military business and for federal democracy and a sustainable peace.