

Unveiling China's Corporate Power Play:

**GUIZHOU
PROVINCIAL
HIGHWAY
ENGINEERING
GROUP CO
AND
CNTIC
IN GEORGIA
AND ABROAD**

2008-2009

2011

2020

2022



**JANUARY
2024**

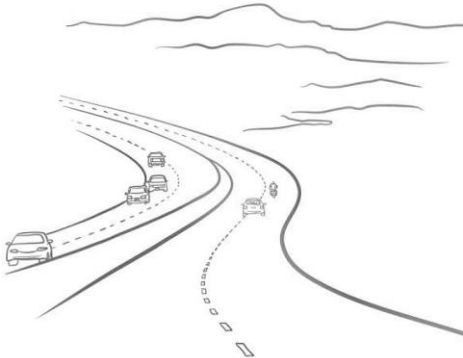
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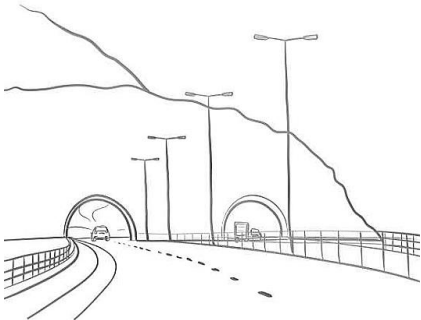
Introduction

Civic IDEA has diligently investigated the activities of PRC-connected companies in Georgia's infrastructure sector for six years, uncovering instances of misconduct not only within Georgia but also across the globe. Our latest focus has been on the China National Technical Import and Export Corporation (CNTIC) and Guizhou Provincial Highway Engineering Group Co (hereinafter - joint venture), operating together under a joint venture. In 2020, these entities entered into an agreement with the Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia for the construction of the Shorapani-Argveta section of the Rikoti Pass. This project, funded by the Asian Development Bank, carries a total cost of 582,777,310 GEL.

4-lane cement-concrete road spanning 14.7 km



14 bridges



12 tunnels

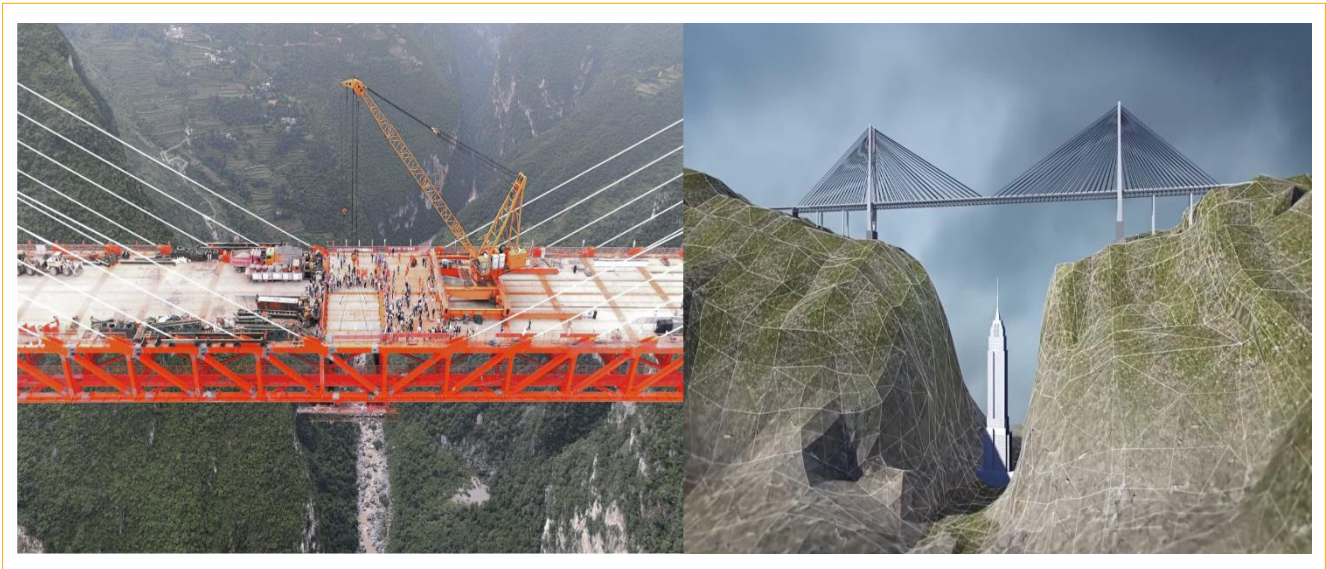
Below, we will provide insights regarding the operations of these companies in Georgia, as well as reports concerning the China National Technical Import and Export Corporation (also referred to as CNTIC). These reports delve into projects undertaken in diverse countries, drawing considerable interest from the international media and readily accessible via open sources.

China National Technical Import & Export Corporation (CNTIC) was founded in September 1952 in Beijing and represents a [large-scale state-owned enterprise](#) operating in

- distributed energy, energy conservation and environment protection,
- power grid infrastructure
- ICT (Information and Communication Technology).

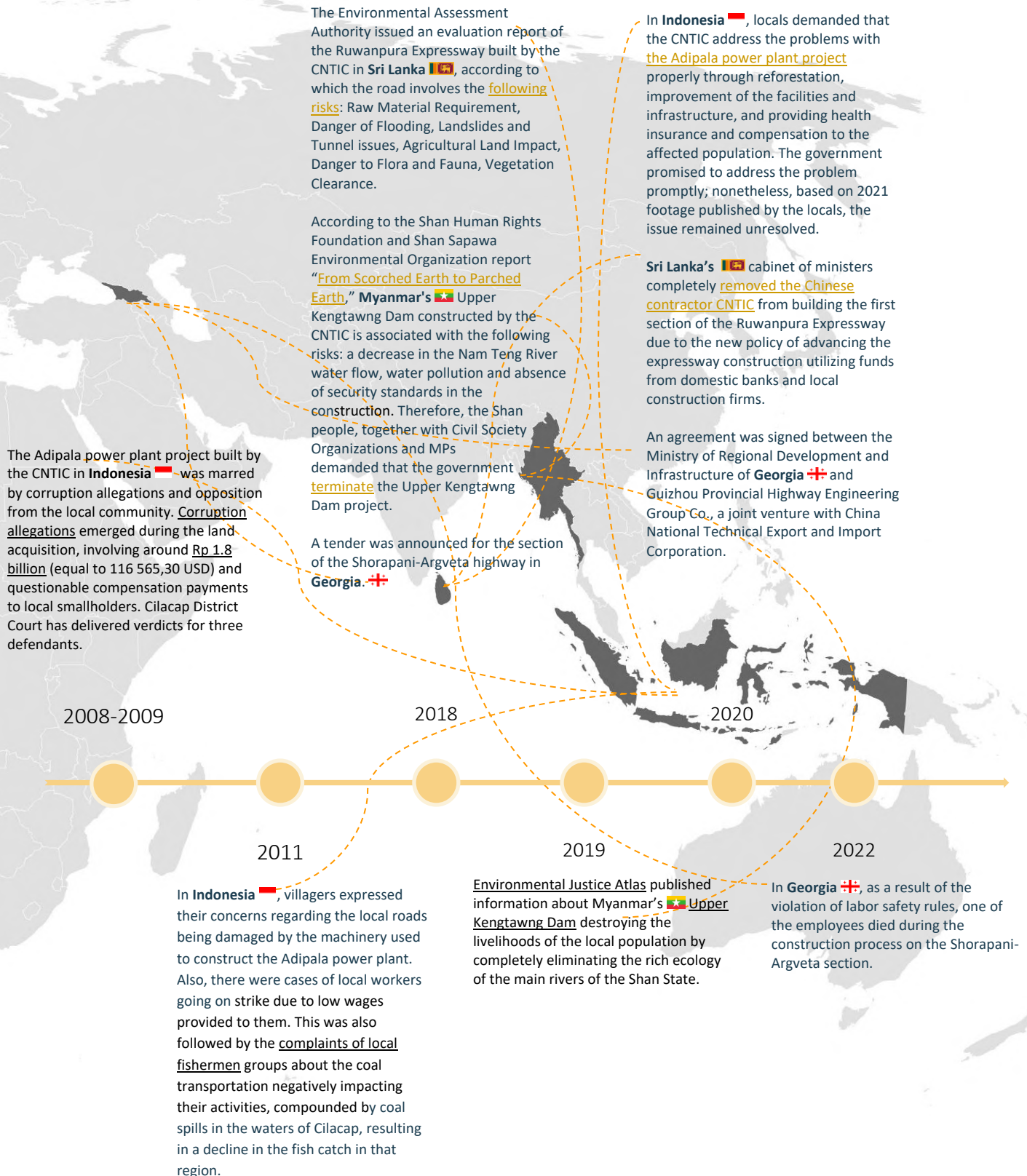
The company is a subsidiary of China General Technology (Group) Holding Co., Ltd., a conglomerate engaged in a wide range of trade and engineering businesses. CNTIC operates in various countries, including but not limited to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bangladesh, the Philippines, Indonesia, Algeria, Ukraine, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka.

Guizhou Provincial Highway Engineering Group Co. is a fully [state-owned](#) company established in [1958](#) by the People's Government of Guizhou Province. The main areas of its activity include the engineering of road foundations and pavements, as well as the construction of highways, bridges and tunnels. According to the information of the Georgian Roads Department, Guizhou Provincial Highway Engineering Group Co. has [61 years](#) of experience, during which it has built more than 6,000 kilometers of roads, 1,200 bridges and tunnels, including the world's highest - [Beipanjiang Bridge](#). The mentioned enterprise appears as a contractor in a number of high-level projects and, most importantly, enjoys special trust from the China Highway Construction Industry Association.¹



¹ A national, voluntary [organization](#) approved and registered by the Ministries of Transport and Civil Affairs, consisting of enterprises, institutions and groups in the national highway construction and related industries.

Event Timeline



Guizhou Provincial Highway Engineering Group Co., and China National Technical Export and Import Corporation in Georgia

Guizhou Provincial Highway Engineering Group Co. was registered on the Georgian market on [January 17, 2020](#), as a branch of a foreign enterprise. Regarding the latter's participation in tenders announced by the Department of Roads within the Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia for highway construction, based on publicly available information from open sources, it has collaborated with the China National Technical Import and Export Corporation. Both entities participate in the tenders as a joint venture.²

The joint venture has taken part in multiple tenders related to highway construction. Notably, it competed for the construction of the Chumateleti-Khevi section in 2018-2019 and, subsequently, the Zemo Osiauri-Chumateleti Road project in 2020. However, in both instances, the construction contracts were awarded to other PRC-connected companies: the China State Construction Engineering Corporation (CSCEC) and Sinohydro³. Regrettably, due to the prevailing practice within the Department of Highways, only those directly involved in the competitions have access to information regarding disqualifications and the reasons behind them. Consequently, it remains challenging to determine the specific criteria under which the joint venture's proposals fell short and which aspects failed to meet the state's requirements.

For now, the joint venture's sole project responsibility involves the construction of a 14.7 km segment of the highway, known as the [Shorapani-Argveta](#) Road. This section is set to become a "cement-concrete [4-lane road](#)," incorporating 14 bridges and 12 tunnels. The tender for this specific section was officially announced on [January 19, 2018](#).

In our ongoing research, alongside gathering comprehensive data on the international standing of the mentioned companies, we aim to delve into the operational dynamics of Guizhou Provincial Highway Engineering Group Co. (Guizhou Highway Engineering Group Co.) and China National Technical Export and Import Corporation within the Georgian market. Consequently, a section of the report will focus on the commitments undertaken by these two enterprises within the scope of the Shorapani-Argveta project and their practical execution.

² Tender database of the State Procurement Agency

³ See the previous footnote.

Conditions for Shorapani-Argveta Project Tender

The Georgian Roads Department has twice announced tenders for the procurement of construction services for the development of the E-60 expressway, specifically targeting the Shorapani-Argveta section (F4).

Within the framework of the first tender, the aforementioned road section was segmented into two lots: Lot F4-A km0+000-km 5+650 and Lot F4-B km5+650- km14+708. Specific [qualification requirements](#) were outlined for each lot. Bids were due by October 1, 2018, yet only two bidders submitted proposals by the deadline. Regrettably, the prices quoted by both candidates significantly surpassed the estimated procurement cost for both lots, resulting in the failure of the tender, as per the Roads Department of Georgia.⁴

A new tender for this section, featuring updated [qualification requirements](#), was announced on June 17, 2019, with a deadline for proposal submissions set for August 22, 2019. As explained by the administrative body, twelve (12) bidders submitted proposals on this occasion, with the contract ultimately awarded to the bidder offering the lowest price.⁵

The stark contrast in the number of proposals received during the first and second tender rounds raises questions, particularly given the relatively unchanged qualification requirements. Additionally, it remains uncertain whether any proposals from the second tender met the project's budget and presented viable alternatives to the joint venture's bid. Despite our request for comprehensive public information regarding the competition, the provided documentation fails to address these specific points.



⁴ Georgian Highway Department's response to our letter

⁵ See previous footnote

Shorapani-Argveta Project Scope and Funding Source

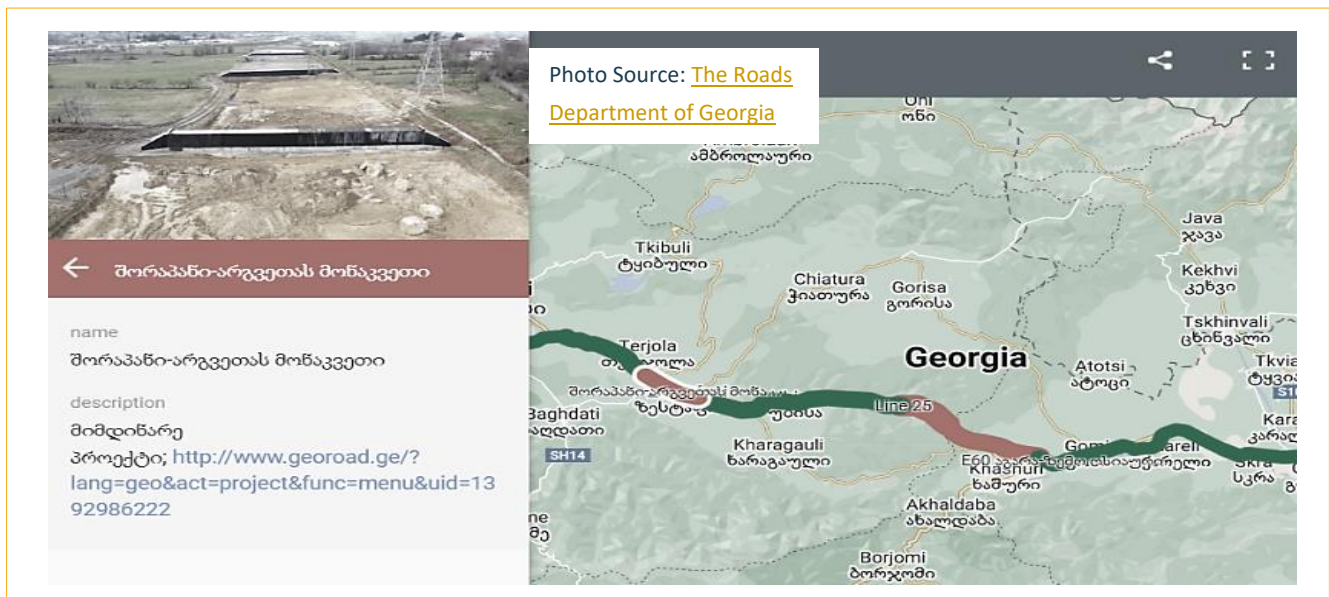
As part of the endorsed project, the construction of the Shorapani-Argveta section encompasses the following:

- Development of a 4-lane cement-concrete road spanning 14.7 km.
- Construction of 14 bridges.
- Implementation of 12 tunnels.

And it is financed by the Asian Development Bank with 582,777,310 GEL.

According to the Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia, these works are expected to take three years to complete. The contract, signed on January 16, 2020, states that the project must have been finished within 1,095 days. This means the construction of the highway section must have been finalized by January 16, 2023. However, the project is still ongoing, indicating that the companies haven't met their contractual obligations within the agreed time.

As per the Roads Department of Georgia, the construction of the Shorapani-Argveta section (F4) of the E-60 expressway is expected to be concluded in 2024. However, there hasn't been any indication from the state regarding how they're addressing the project's delay beyond the agreed-upon timeframe.⁶



⁶ Georgian Highway Department's response to our letter

Construction Supervision

Within the Shorapani-Argveta section construction project, the Asian Development Bank conducts regular assessments of social, financial, and environmental factors. The most recent social report indicates that the construction activities undertaken by the joint venture not only impact the social well-being of the local community but also have long-term environmental ramifications in the area.

Several significant violations have been identified, including:

- **Infrastructure and asset damage:** Activities by the joint venture have jeopardized the drinking water supply system and private properties. Construction works posed risks of flooding, leading to complaints totaling 113.
 - **Land acquisition and resettlement issues:** Construction activities resulted in damage to land plots and restricted access to residential areas, prompting 35 complaints seeking compensation, design changes, and similar resolutions.
 - **Access limitations:** During construction, part of the population faced restricted access to their properties, with 25 complaints registered regarding this issue.
 - **Noise, dust, and vibration:** Seven complaints reported deteriorating living conditions due to construction-related disturbances, as documented in the Asian Development Bank report.
 - **Flooding risks:** Some residents have demanded the construction of a retaining wall and drainage channel due to flood risks, highlighting the need for additional measures.

Violations such as the discharge of contaminated water directly into the environment, improper management of hazardous waste—such as neglecting storage conditions or leaving waste untreated—septic tank leakage into wastewater, and failure to adhere to sanitary regulations, among others, can significantly impact the ecological situation on the site in the future if appropriate preventive measures are not implemented.

The joint venture's disregard for the mentioned issues not only goes against international standards and breaches environmental protection norms crucial for humans but also directly defies the obligations set forth in the agreement.

Violation of Labor Safety Regulations

According to an examination carried out by the Labor Inspection Agency in 2022, Guizhou Provincial Highway Engineering Group Co. was found to have violated labor safety regulations. These breaches led to a fatal accident on April 17, 2022. The company has repeatedly violated safety regulations for working at heights and construction work, resulting in warnings and various penalties such as fines and suspension of construction activities.

Unfortunately, the systematic nature of these violations suggests that the enterprise fails to address these issues and implement necessary measures adequately. Furthermore, it appears that Guizhou Provincial Highway Engineering Group Co. did not report the accident to the Ministry of Labor, Health, and Social Protection of Internally Displaced Persons from the occupied territories of Georgia.

CNTIC International Scandals

Concerns Over the Dam Project in Shan State, Myanmar

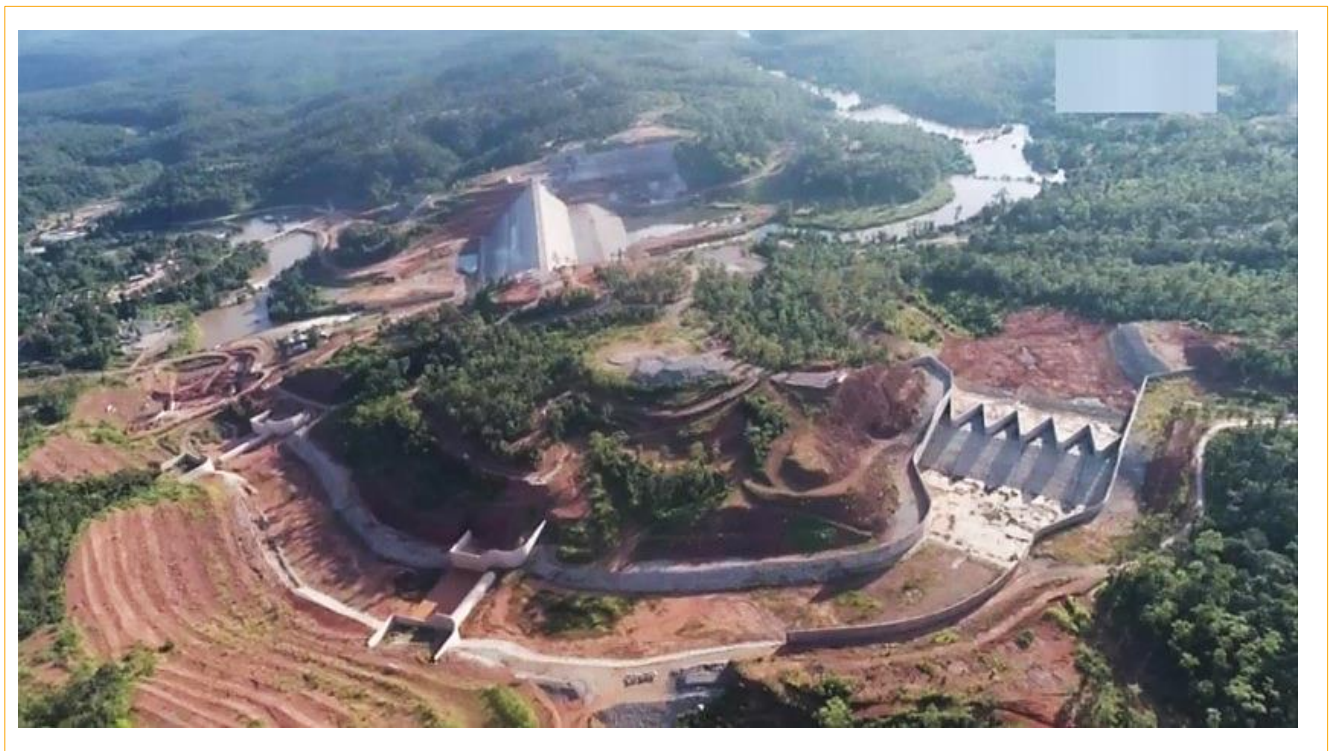
CNTIC was engaged in a controversial project, the Upper Kengtawng Dam, in Shan State, Myanmar. The latter has been associated with conflicts, human rights violations, and environmental harm, facing strong opposition from the local communities.

Upper Kengtawng Dam is one of the 50 large dams planned by Myanmar's Ministry of Electricity and Energy, a structure situated 40km upstream of the already existing Kengtawng hydro-power project. It represents a 57-meter-high rock-fill structure stretching approximately 15 kilometers on the river Nam Teng. The project started in 2009 with the sole financing of the local Ministry of Electricity and Energy. In 2010, the former military regime, referred to as the State Peace and Development Committee (SPDC), signed the Memorandum of Understanding with the National Technical Import & Export Corporation with regard to supplying generators, turbines and machinery for the project. Upper Kengtawng Dam was expected to be finished in 2020-2021. However, Union Minister for Electric Power U Thaung Han indicated that the project had achieved a completion rate of **72.2%** by 2022, and it was scheduled for full completion by March 2025.



According to the 2018 Shan Human Rights Foundation and Shan Sapawa Environmental Organization report "[From Scorched Earth to Parched Earth](#)," the dam construction is associated with several risk factors:

- First, the water flow from the dam would unavoidably decrease during the dry season due to the necessity of water storage for electricity generation. This will have repercussions for numerous farmers downstream who depend on the Nam Teng to irrigate their riverside fields during the dry season, especially when river levels are already historically low.
- Another critical problem is related to [water pollution](#), which will affect the biodiversity and health of the rural villagers living near the dam. All the toxic chemicals and decaying submerged vegetation washed down upstream will change the water condition. Local inhabitants have already complained about the foul smell and the contaminated structure of the water, affecting the people's health and causing fish stock depletion.
- Besides, the report highlights that the local population is skeptical about the [dam's construction standards](#) due to the previous experiences of the government's negligence in prioritizing their safety and interests. In this case, the dam breakage would have jeopardized the health of 8,000 people living below it. Therefore, the Shan people, together with the Civil Society Organizations and MPs, demanded the government to [terminate](#) the Upper Kengtawng Dam project.



In 2019, Environmental Justice Atlas [published](#) information about the Upper Kengtawng Dam destroying the livelihoods of the local population by completely eliminating the rich ecology of the main rivers of the Shan State. Moreover, this project was initially boosted by the occupying military force, which has been [terrorizing Shan inhabitants](#) for years, displacing them from rural areas to relocation centers. This displacement facilitated the construction of the Upper Kengtawng Dam.

Controversial Adipala Power Plant in Indonesia

CNTIC is involved in another big project in Indonesia, embroiled in environmental and corruption scandals. The Adipala power station is owned by the Perusahaan Listrik Negara, also known as [PT PLN](#), a national electricity unit possessed by the Indonesian government.

In November 2009, the PLN team [met](#) with the CNTIC Deputy General Manager, Shan Wei, to discuss the construction of the Adipala power plant project. One month earlier, Indonesia [signed a contract](#) with the China Development Bank to receive USD 1.1 billion worth of loans for building the power plant infrastructure in the country, covering the construction of other power stations apart from Adipala. USD 625 million out of the whole amount was [allocated](#) solely to fund the Adipala power plant project contracted by the CNTIC. Overall, the project was finished in 2015, and the total cost amounted to USD 876.48 million. This occasion implies that the project exceeded the initially set budget by an additional USD 251 million.



During the pre-construction period (2008-2009), the Adipala power plant project was marred by corruption allegations and opposition from the local community. [Corruption allegations](#) emerged during the land acquisition, involving around [Rp 1.8 billion](#) (equal to 116 565,30 USD) and questionable

compensation payments to local smallholders. Cilacap District Court has delivered verdicts for three defendants, including former officials from Bunton village, Adipala sub-district, and the Cilacap regional secretary. One suspect [remains at large](#), and one official was dismissed in 2013.

During the construction in 2011, villagers expressed their concerns regarding the local roads being damaged by the machinery used to construct the Adipala power plant. Besides, they mentioned that the promise of their employment on the worksite was disregarded by the contractors. Also, there were cases of local workers going on strike due to low wages provided to them. This was also followed by the [complaints](#) of local fishermen groups about the coal transportation negatively impacting their activities, compounded by coal spills in the waters of Cilacap, resulting in a decline in the fish catch in that region.

After its construction, the power plant faced much criticism from local inhabitants, who complained about the catastrophic environmental hazards, such as coal dust pollution, which jeopardized their health. Residents have highlighted that due to the coal dust, they experienced [respiratory problems](#).

In 2020, they demanded that the company address the problem properly through reforestation, improvement of the facilities and infrastructure, and providing health insurance and compensation to the affected population. The government promised that they would address the problem promptly; nonetheless, based on 2021 footage published by the locals, the issue remained unresolved.



Manajer PT Indonesia Power PLTU 2 Bunton Kukuh Pambudi mengucapkan terimakasih kepada warga yang mau berdiskusi bersama. (Foto: Pendim Cilacap for TIMES Indonesia)

In 2023, the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources of Indonesia announced the [early retirement](#) of 33 coal-fired power plants, including the Adipala power plant, within its plan to achieve the 2060 net zero emission goal. In this context, early retirement refers to the decision to decommission or retire coal-fired power plants before the end of their expected operational lifespan. The government anticipates assistance from foreign donors in funding the early retirement program for the power plants. In 2022, the government entered into the USD 20 billion Just Energy Transition Partnership (JETP) agreement to support the program financially. However, there is a high chance that the funds allocated will be insufficient to implement the program fully.

The Sri Lankan Debt Crisis

In 2017, The Sri Lankan Ministry of Highways awarded the first section of the Ruwanpura Expressway to the Chinese CNTIC without conducting a competitive bidding. The section stretches 26.3 km from Kahathuduwa to Ingiriya, and the funding for its execution was initially suggested to be sought from the [Chinese Exim Bank](#). The other three sections of the highway were also granted with single bids to the other pre-selected Chinese companies.

Table 2: Financial terms and expected economic benefits of major Chinese projects

Project Name	Loan/Investment	Amount \$ million	Loan terms	Foreign lender/Investor	Implementing agency	Contractor	Economic benefits
Southern Expressway (ongoing, started construction in 2011)	Loan (4)	1,545	Fixed Rate – 2%	EXIM	Road Development Authority	CCC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 48% of total expressways. Commute to Galle from Colombo has halved from 3 hours to 1.5 hours. Better infrastructure has allowed the southern coast to develop as a tourist hotspot.
Outer Circular Highway Project (ongoing, started construction in 2014)	Loan (1)	494	Fixed Rate – 2%	EXIM	Road Development Authority	Metallurgical Corporation of China Ltd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5% of total expressways. Easier commute to Colombo from suburbs.
Colombo Katunayake Expressway (completed in 2013, started construction in 2009)	Loan (1)	248	Fixed Rate – 6.3%	EXIM	Road Development Authority	China Metallurgical Group Corporation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 15% of total expressways. Reduced commuting time to airport from 2 to 1.5 hours from Central Colombo.
Hambantota International Airport project (completed in 2013, started construction in 2010)	Loan	190	Fixed Rate – 2%	EXIM	Airport & Aviation Lanka Limited	CHEC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emergency landings possible with 2nd airport. Saved Sri Lanka \$1.5 M per flight, if diverted to Southern India during an emergency. Increased national passenger capacity, reducing congestion at Colombo Airport.
Hambantota Port Development Project (completed, started construction in 2007)	Loan (3)	1,335.7	Fixed (2–6.5%) and Variable Rates	EXIM	Sri Lanka Ports Authority	CHEC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Industrial zone will bring in more primary industries. Diversified port operations through the addition of value-added services.
CICT Colombo Terminal (completed in 2014, started construction in 2011)	Investment	500	N/A	CMPH	Sri Lanka Ports Authority	CMPH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Currently the only deep-water terminal in South Asia equipped with facilities to handle the largest vessels afloat. CICT has helped the Port of Colombo to move up the Drewry's Port Connectivity Index to be ranked the 11th best connected port in the world in 2018.
Norocholai power station (completed in March 2011, started construction in 2006)	Loan (3)	1,346	Fixed Rate – 2%	EXIM	Ceylon Electricity Board	China Machinery Engineering Corporation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accounts for 31% of total installed capacity of CEB-owned power plants. Accounts for 33% of Sri Lanka's total power generated in 2018.
Colombo Port City (ongoing, to be completed in 2042, started construction in 2014)	Investment	1,300	N/A	CHEC	N/A	CHEC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adding 1.5 million units of A-Grade office space (tripling total office space in Colombo). Would improve Sri Lanka's ease of doing business rankings. Likely to attract high tier financial services.
Lotus Tower (completed in September 2019, started construction in 2012)	Loan	88.6		EXIM	Telecommunications Regulatory Commission of Sri Lanka	China National Electronics Import & Export Corporation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve telecommunications infrastructure. Reduce the number of downtime incidences. Provide leisure activities to public.

Source: Calculations based on data provided by the Central Bank of Sri Lanka, Department of External Resources, Ministry of Finance, Sri Lanka; Board of Investments, Sri Lanka, and various interviews with key persons.

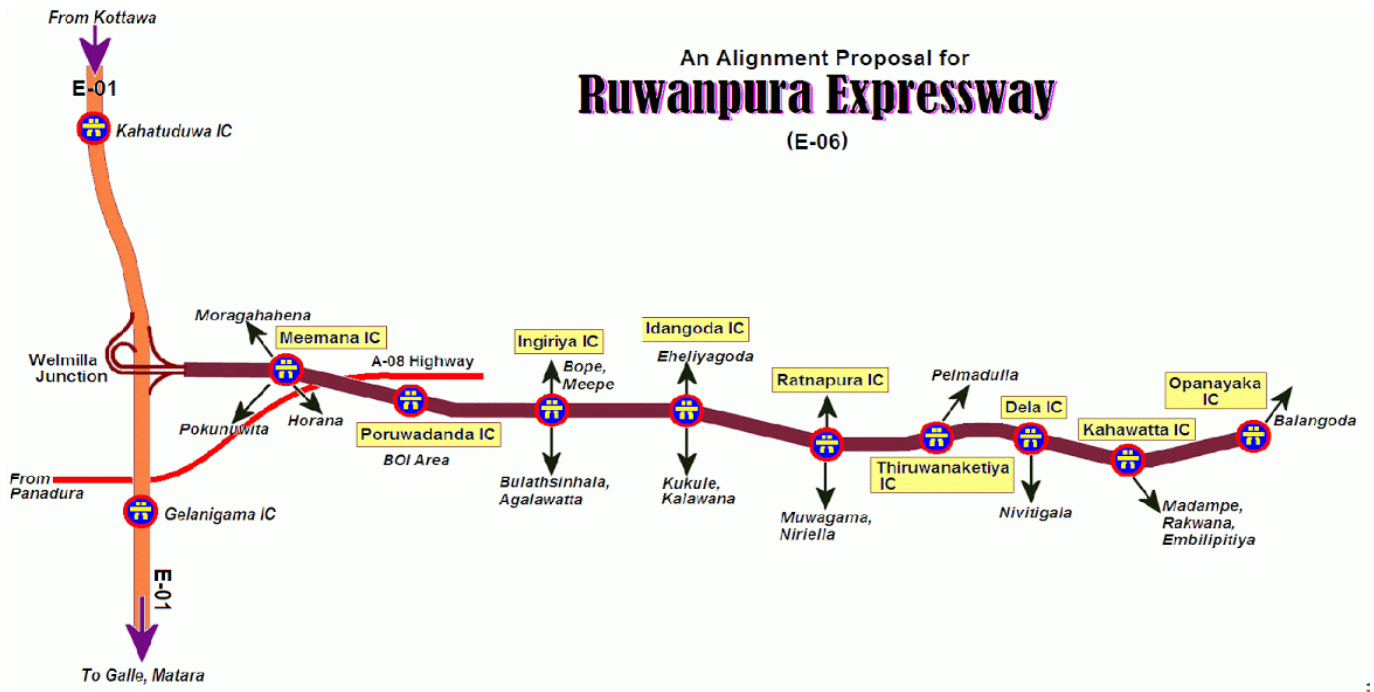
Notes: EXIM: Export-Import Bank of China; CMPH: China Merchant Port Holdings; CHEC: China Harbour Engineering Company; CCC: China Communications Construction Company Limited.

It is highly notable that between 2014-2017, Sri Lanka's total loan from Exim Bank amounted to \$1.6 billion, leading to a substantial economic deficit that hindered the country's ability to secure additional loans. By 2023, the debt from the Chinese Export-Import Bank grew to \$4.2 billion, causing a tremendous financial crisis in the country.

Two major Chinese debtors of Sri Lanka are Exim Bank and China Development Bank. Sri Lanka, being a poor island, is unable to pay back the Chinese loan, providing China with opportunities to extend its geopolitical influence and gain control over the island's critical assets. A vivid example occurred in 2022 when the PLA ship "Yuan Wang 5" docked at Hambantota Port in Sri Lanka, despite the US and India's preliminary attempts to convince the Sri Lankan government to reject their request.

In addition to the evident and conspicuous signs of Sri Lanka falling into the Chinese debt trap, the Ruwanpura Expressway failed to meet the requirements set forth by the National Physical Planning (NPP) Department and the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). The NPP identified the worksite as a fragile area with essential water catchments, highlighting the importance of preserving it for sustainable development. Hence, the impact of potential landslides and flooding would undermine the economic feasibility of the whole project. In 2018, the Environmental Assessment Authority issued an evaluation report of the Ruwanpura Expressway, according to which the road involves the following risks:

- Raw Material Requirement - Soil for the Expressway must be sourced from nearby areas, which may result in environmental damage, excavation of hilly regions, and water resource depletion.
- Danger of Flooding – If not mitigated, the expressway may cause additional flood elevations and delayed flood recession.
- Landslides and Tunnel issues – The road corridor is susceptible to landslides and slope failures due to consistent high rainfall.
- Agricultural Land Impact – The project will significantly lose arable land, including paddy, tea, and rubber plantations. Changes in irrigation schemes may render some lands uncultivable, impacting cost-benefit analysis.
- Danger to Flora and Fauna – The area hosts 79 endemic flora and 80 endemic fauna species, which must be conserved. The construction might cause habitat fragmentation.
- Vegetation Clearance – A large amount of land cleared for the project will permanently lose habitats for fauna.



Considering the abovementioned issues, it is unsurprising that there was no progress on the project's construction and financing until 2020. In February 2020, the new government, led by the [Rajapaksa brothers](#), decided to [revive](#) the suspended Ruwanpura Expressway project. Later, due to the economic crisis that the debt trap had already caused to the state, the then government of Sri Lanka announced that it would implement the critical road projects solely through private partnerships. In other words, because of the lack of funds, the government imposed strict conditions for infrastructure projects, including full upfront payment, a five-year grace period for loan repayment, a three-year project completion timeline during which the Government should not be obliged to pay any interest, and a preference for dollar loans over other currencies. The cabinet of ministers has initially approved to re-award CNTIC the contract to recover the project. Nonetheless, the cabinet [decided](#) “to authorize Secretary Ministry of Roads and Highways to request M/s CNTIC to provide 100% financing for the cost of Section 1 of the Ruwanpura Expressway.” Therefore, the construction of Section I of the Ruwanpura Expressway, with the Chinese loan, has been abandoned, and the signing of an agreement between the Road Department Authority and the winning contractor, CNTIC, has been prolonged. Already in July 2020, the cabinet completely [removed the Chinese contractor CNTIC](#) from building the first section of the road due to the new policy of advancing the expressway construction utilizing funds from domestic banks and local construction firms. Hence, according to the [SVAT RIS Details Report 2023](#), China National Technical Import & Export Corporation has no active project of Ruwanpura Expressway in Sri Lanka.

Conclusion

In order to make it even clearer why the government should not cooperate with such scandalous companies and why they should conduct the proper “due diligence” of their shady reputation beforehand, the report sheds light on the controversial engagements of the companies, and in particular the China National Technical Import and Export Corporation, in various infrastructure projects internationally, namely the Upper Kengtawng Dam in Myanmar, the Adipala Power Plant in Indonesia, and the Ruwanpura Expressway in Sri Lanka. These projects have been marred by conflicts, human rights violations, environmental concerns, and financial issues. The Upper Kengtawng Dam faces opposition from local communities due to its potential impact on water flow, pollution, and safety standards. The Adipala Power Plant in Indonesia has been criticized for corruption, environmental hazards, and inadequate response to community concerns. Lastly, the Ruwanpura Expressway in Sri Lanka, aside from contributing to the country's debt crisis, faced environmental challenges and was eventually abandoned due to financial constraints and a shift in government policy. With this report, we once again tried to underscore **the need for responsible and sustainable infrastructure development practices**, considering the social, environmental, and economic implications of such projects. Hence, by leveraging existing international experience and conducting thorough research on contracting companies, state entities can prevent similar challenges in the future.

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Authors: ·

ANI KINTSURASHVILI
KETEVAN GELASHVILI

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Tbilisi, Georgia

info@civicidea.ge
info@virtualdemacademy.com