

Mr. Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan
CC: Mr. Taro Aso, Minister for Foreign Affairs
Mr. Masatoshi Wakabayashi, Minister of the Environment

January 9, 2007

RE: Call for Removal of Tariff Reduction for Toxic Waste Provisions from JTEPA

Dear Mr. Shinzo Abe,

On behalf of Greenpeace Southeast Asia, an independent environmental campaigning organisation, I am writing to call for removal of tariff elimination for toxic waste provision from the Japan-Thailand Economic Partnership Agreement (JTEPA) that is now being considered for signing by both Governments.

The Thai Foreign Affairs Ministry has recently confirmed in an official letter that JTEPA includes a list of hazardous wastes as products for tariff reduction in export from Japan to Thailand. These wastes include slag, ash and residues from the incineration of municipal waste, residual products of the chemical or allied industries, municipal waste, sewage sludge, and other wastes. These hazardous waste exports by Japan, whether for recycling or final disposal is totally unacceptable.

Thailand is already facing a lot of problems from its own toxic wastes. Only 50% of 1.405 million tons of hazardous waste from the industrial sector were disposed and most of the 0.403 million tons of hazardous waste from households were not managed appropriately, resulting in many illegal toxic waste dumping cases. Additionally it is already receiving toxic waste from developed countries including Japan and if JTEPA with the tariff reduction for toxic waste provisions enters into force, it will certainly add to the waste crisis in Thailand and open the floodgates to waste dumping from all over the world.

Both Thailand and Japan are signatories of the Basel Convention, which originated from an international attempt to solve problem of waste from industrialized countries being dumped in developing countries. JTEPA is a total contradiction to the intention of the Convention. The Basel Convention, however, allows toxic waste imports for recycling. The Ban Amendment was therefore adopted to prohibit all hazardous waste exports and imports even for recycling. Not only Japan has not ratified the Ban, it, along with the US, Canada, and Australia, has been strongly opposing to Basel Ban enforcement in a similar way that it is unashamedly attempting to legalise toxic waste dumping in Thailand via JTEPA.

Instead of attempting to shift the responsibility for dealing with mounting piles of hazardous waste generated in Japan to Thailand that will threaten the environment and health of the Thai people, Japan should develop its own capacity to manage its own hazardous wastes within its own borders.

We demand that :

1. Both the Thai National Legislative Assembly and Japanese Diet must refuse to ratify the agreement until all listings of waste are expunged from tariff reduction provisions.
2. Japan and Thailand must both ratify the Basel Convention's Ban Amendment at the earliest possible date to send a strong message of intent to uphold the principles of the Basel Convention on environmental justice and national waste management self-sufficiency. It is glaring that both of the countries have still not ratified the Basel Ban after being called upon by the Parties to do so since 1995.
3. A full impartial multi-stakeholder inquiry in both Japan and Thailand must be made to determine how such provisions were included in the JTEPA, who promoted them and the motivation for this.
4. Japan and Thailand must embark on a serious program to prevent hazardous and other wastes at source via toxics use reductions and elimination of excessive packaging and planned obsolescence.

Sincerely,

Kittikhun Kittiarom, Mr.
Toxics Campaigner
Greenpeace Southeast Asia