

September 13, 2021

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Taro Aso, Minister of Finance
Hiroshi Kajiyama, Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry
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NGOs call on JICA to stop funding Matarbari coal-fired power project in Bangladesh in reaction to injunction by Dhaka High Court

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On September 12, with regard to the Matarbari ultra super critical coal-fired power project in Bangladesh, which is being funded by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), several local newspapers reported that the Dhaka High Court issued an injunction to the implementing agency to stop illegal filling of the river, caused by the construction of an access road [1]. In reaction to this, we, environmental NGOs, urge JICA to stop the loan disbursement, complying with JICA's Guidelines for Environmental and Social Considerations (hereinafter "the Guidelines").

The access road is being constructed along the Kohelia River for the Matarbari ultra super critical coal-fired power project. In constructing the road, the implementing agency under the Bangladesh government has been filling up the river, which causes problems for local residents to access the river. In addition, there are concerns about the adverse impacts on the ecosystem, however, the environmental impact assessment report of the project does not examine the impact of filling the river. At the 75th meeting between the Japan Ministry of Finance (MoF) and NGOs, held on March 5, 2021, NGOs urged the MoF to improve the situation, and a MoF official in charge responded that they would have a communication with stakeholders to encourage them to undertake appropriate environmental and social considerations [2]. However, the dredged soil has not been removed from the river yet.

In the Guidelines, JICA needs to confirm that projects "comply with the laws or standards related to the environment and local communities in the central and local governments of host countries; it also confirms that projects conform to those governments' policies and plans on the environment and local communities." In addition, the Guidelines require JICA to include in the agreement document with the host country that "[i]f it becomes evident that project proponents etc. have not met the conditions set out by JICA in the guidelines, or if it becomes apparent that projects will have adverse impacts on the environment after the conclusion of agreement documents because of the failure of Project proponents etc. to supply correct information during the environmental review process, JICA may, in accordance with agreement documents, make changes to the agreement, including the

suspension and declaration of the principal outstanding due and of Loan aid, grant aid, and technical cooperation projects.”

Therefore, considering the injunction issued by Dhaka High Court against the construction of the access road, JICA should stop the loan disbursement in accordance with the Guidelines.

Contact

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[1]

<https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/court/2021/09/12/high-court-issues-rule-to-stop-illegal-filling-of-kohelia-river>

<https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/crime-justice/news/hc-issues-injunction-sand-filling-kohelia-river-coxs-bazar-2174296>

<https://www.newagebd.net/article/148955/hc-bars-sand-filling-in-kohelia-in-coxs-bazar>

[2] <http://jacses.org/1025/> (in Japanese)