



Bangladesh
Working Group on
External Debt



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Global Call to End Coal Marks First Climate Test for New Japanese Administration

Japan taken to task over Bangladesh coal power plans

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Dhaka · Tokyo · Washington D.C. – In a first climate test for the new Suga Administration in Japan, a major coalition of civil society organizations is holding a global call to stop Japanese coal finance in Bangladesh. The events will oppose Japanese involvement in new coal-fired power plants proposed to be built in Matarbari, Bangladesh and urge their replacement with renewable energy.

These power plants, as well as a coal terminal, would spread pollution over the long stretches of sandy beaches of Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh's premier tourist destination, a nearby marine reserve and wildlife sanctuaries. An estimated 100,000 fishermen also rely on this area for their livelihoods.

The Global Call includes:

- Activists forming a human chain at-risk **Kohelia River in Matarbari**;
- An online rally featuring hundreds of people co-organised by 14 organisations **across the world**, coming together to call for Japan to end coal finance in Bangladesh
- A billboard truck circling downtown **Washington D.C.** to target the Japanese Embassy, Sumitomo Corporation of the Americas, and JICA USA, calling out Sumitomo Corporation and the Japanese government for their involvement in the Matarbari coal plant project.
- Environmental NGOs protesting against Sumitomo Corporation and JICA with a digital photo action in **Tokyo**

Images are available [here](#).

Sharif Jamil, Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon (BAPA) General Secretary said, “Japan is one of the most important development partners of Bangladesh. However, the coal based power plants under construction in Matarbari in the name of development reflects environmental racism towards our nation.”

“They are destroying the entire Kohelia River, evicting people and their livelihoods in those areas and going to emit pollutants to the air at a much higher level than the standard permissible for new coal power projects in Japan. We demand Japan to stop destroying our ecology and public health. Japan should cancel the coal plants and help Bangladesh towards sustainable growth.”

[Japan’s Sumitomo Corporation is currently constructing one 1200MW coal plant at Matarbari](#) with funding from the Japanese government through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). Despite international pledges to end coal finance, just this summer the Japanese government [moved forward with a planning process](#) to build yet another 1200MW plant at the Matarbari site.

Yuki Tanabe, Program Director for Japan Center for a Sustainable Environment and Society (JACSES), said, “In July 2020, the Government of Japan revised its coal financing policy, which states that ‘in principle, the government will not provide official financial support.’ However, projects that are already in the pipeline, including Matarbari 2, fall within the exceptions. Matarbari 2 is just in the beginning stages of project preparation, which is definitely still reversible.”

A [study](#) released on Tuesday this week by the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air assessed the cumulative impacts from these projects. Alarming, air pollution from Matarbari 1 and 2 coal plants would exacerbate the region’s poor air quality, resulting in increased illness and the premature deaths of 6,700 people. No pollution controls for mercury would result in widespread contamination of local farmland and waters by the toxic element.

Conversely, according to a recent [University of Berkeley-led study](#) there is potential for up to 53 gigawatts (GW) of solar power capacity in Bangladesh, which could replace planned coal power projects as a lower cost alternative for electricity generation.

"Japan's new administration must ensure a safe future for Bangladeshis instead of financing dirty energy projects. Every day, Bangladeshis are bearing the brunt of climate change impacts. This year alone, we saw record breaking cyclones and storm surges and floods that inundated one third of our country. If Japan is serious about their commitment to Bangladesh's sustainable development, they must proactively promote renewable energy." said **Hasan Mehedi, Member Secretary, Bangladesh Working Group on External Debt (BWGED)**.

“Mighty Earth is proud to take part in this global event to support the people of Bangladesh. The planned Matarbari Phase 2 coal plant would further burden Bangladeshis with air pollution, pollute fish and farmland with mercury pollution, and place them at further risk from climate change impacts.

Sumitomo Corporation claims to be going carbon neutral, yet still builds new coal plants, making its policy meaningless. We're calling on Sumitomo to announce it will not take part in the Matarbari 2 coal plant," said **Roger Smith, Japan Project Manager for Mighty Earth.**

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