

June 28, 2016

Fred Hochberg  
Chairman & President  
Export-Import Bank of the United States

RE: Reject financing for Orion's coal fired power plants in Bangladesh

Dear Chairman Hochberg,

The proposed Orion Khulna coal plant would gravely damage the Sundarbans, the world's largest mangrove forest, threaten the human rights of thousands of local people, and contribute to runaway climate change. In addition, the Orion coal plant proposed to be built near Dhaka threatens the air and water of 17 million people.

We first alerted you to this issue in a [letter](#) signed by civil society groups dated March 4, 2016, and are now joined by 156,648 individuals in demanding the bank promptly and publicly reject any potential financing for these projects and any other proposals for coal financing in Bangladesh (please see the enclosed petition files for the full list of petition signers).

Orion Group, a Bangladeshi conglomerate with a history of corruption allegations, is building two coal-fired power plants. One plant's infrastructure and emissions would have devastating impacts on the World Heritage site as it is located less than 9 miles from the Sundarbans. The Orion Khulna project poses serious threats to the Sundarbans, the world's largest mangrove forest, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and a safe haven for already threatened species, including the Bengal tiger.

The Orion Dhaka plant, which would be located right outside the capital, Dhaka, poses serious health risks to the 17 million people that live in the surrounding metropolitan area.

Building coal plants on the forest's fringes means, abusing the rights of the thousands of people who live near and depend on the Sundarbans. Locals are displaced from their land and deprived of their livelihoods. The construction of the nearby Rampal coal-fired power plant has already displaced a number of families. Fierce citizen opposition to the projects has been ignored at best, suppressed at worst. And yet, Orion has already started construction -- before receiving formal environmental clearance!

According to [news reports](#) and [Orion's own documents](#), Orion has possibly approached the U.S. Export-Import Bank, a government agency that has already used billions of taxpayer dollars to finance fossil fuel projects abroad, for funding for these harmful coal plants in Bangladesh. U.S. Ex-Im Bank's support for these projects would grease the wheels for coal development abroad, while domestically the U.S. moves away from this

dirty fuel. Not to mention, these deals would call into question U.S Ex-Im Bank's commitment to its own policies on climate change and human rights.

The U.S. Ex-Im Bank must not funnel taxpayer dollars into dirty coal plants dangerously close to a unique biodiversity hotspot and a major population center. It is a betrayal of the Paris climate agreement, where just months ago the United States joined the rest of the world in committing to keeping global warming under 1.5 degrees Celsius. U.S. Ex-Im Bank must be part of the just energy transition and invest in renewables that will help increase access to electricity and won't harm our environment. We urge U.S. Ex-Im Bank to promptly and publicly reject financing for all coal projects in Bangladesh and in particular the Orion Khulna and Dhaka plants that threaten world treasures like the Sundarbans and pollute the air of millions.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Bangladesh Environmental Network  
Brown and Green: South Asian Americans for Climate Justice  
EcoSikh  
Environmental Movement Atlanta  
Friends of the U.S.  
Rainforest Action Network  
Sierra Club  
Center for Biological Diversity  
Waterkeeper Alliance  
Climate First  
Credo Action  
Greenpeace US  
Bank Information Center  
Center for International Environmental Law  
Food and Water Watch  
Sustain Us  
Energy Action Coalition  
Wild Earth Guardians  
National Committee to Save the Sundarbans, Bangladesh

Sources:

1. “Bangladesh Sticks With Coal Power Plant Project Despite Major Backlash,” Mongabay, February 16, 2016, <http://news.mongabay.com/2016/02/bangladesh-sticks-with-coal-power-plant-project-despite-major-backlash/>
2. Dr. Abdullah Harun Chowdhury, “Environmental Impact of Coal Based Power Plant of Rampal on the Sundarbans and Surrounding Areas,” Khulna University, <http://bagerhatsociety.com/apanel/admin/download/tdwn2573136.pdf>
3. “Ganges River Dolphin,” World Wildlife Foundation, <http://www.worldwildlife.org/species/ganges-river-dolphin>
4. “Orion Signs Deals for Generators for its 660MW Power Plant,” The Daily Star, May 11, 2014, <http://www.thedailystar.net/orion-signs-deals-for-generators-for-its-660mw-power-plant-23556>
5. Sönke Kreft, David Eckstein, Lukas Dorsch, and Livia Fischer, “Global Climate Risk Index 2016,” GermanWatch, November 2015, <http://germanwatch.org/fr/download/13503.pdf>