

## **KUS Klima- und Umweltbündnis Stuttgart**

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**Press Release, 17<sup>th</sup> July 2019**

**The Stuttgart-based Fichtner GmbH is involved in the construction of a coal power plant in Bangladesh, thereby affecting the climate and endanger the UNESCO World Heritage Site of the Sundarbans, the largest mangrove forests on earth.**

**According to information available to us, Stuttgarter Fichtner GmbH is the leading engineering company in the current construction of a coal-fired power plant in the immediate vicinity of the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Sundarban in Bangladesh.**

Bangladesh is one of the South and Southeast Asian countries where many new climate-damaging coal-fired power plants are currently being built. One of the most controversial power plants in Bangladesh is the **Rampal coal-fired power plant, which is to be built in close proximity to the world's largest mangrove forests, the Sundarbans on the Bay of Bengal in Bangladesh.** This power plant will cost a total of about two billion US dollars and have a capacity of 1,320 MW.

The UNESCO Committee for the World Natural Heritage has in recent years repeatedly dealt with the feared effects of this power plant, because part of the Sunderbans is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The forest is a natural protective barrier against hurricanes and free coastal protection for the land threatened by sea-level rise. Former German Ambassador to Bangladesh, Albrecht Conze, criticized this location as early as 2014; it was "little adventurous or even hazardous to plan something just a few kilometre from the borders (of the Sundarbans) with regard to the status" to build this power plant, he said.

At this year's session in Azerbaijan in early July 2019, the World Heritage Committee postponed its decision to put the Sunderbans site on the UNESCO 'List of World Heritage in Danger' to its next meeting in 2020. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), which is the official advisory body of UNESCO, has proposed shortly before this session to put this site on this list already this year because of the Rampal power plant and other planned industries. **But the committee has asked the government of Bangladesh to come up with a comprehensive protection plan.**

According to the information available to us, Fichtner is involved in the construction of two further

coal-fired power plants in Bangladesh (Matarbarhi and Kohlia) in addition to the construction of the Rampal power plant. According to the project website of the Indian branch of the company, Fichtner GmbH is also involved in the planning, construction and operation of eight coal-fired power plants in India (see <https://www.fichtner.co.in/projects/>) and a coal-fired power plant in Malaysia (see <https://www.fichtner.de/en/projects/>). Fichtner claims to be "Germany's largest independent engineering and consulting company for infrastructure projects." The company writes in its "Corporate Philosophy" document of July 2018: "We are committed to sustainability and conservation of resources. We seek solutions that are sus-tainable and that protect the environment. As far as possible, the solutions proposed should mini-mize any existential threat to future generations. "

John H. Knox, Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and Environment of the UN Human Rights Council 2015-2018, criticized in 2018 the impact of the Rampal coal-fired power plant, which is a prerequisite for later industrialization: **"The accelerating industrialisation of the Sundarbans threatens not only this unique ecosystem but also poses serious risks to the human rights of the 6.5 million people whose lives, health, housing, food and cultural activities depend directly on a safe, healthy and sustainable Sundarbans forest.** Despite objections from UNESCO's World Heritage Committee and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, Bangladesh has approved more than 320 industrial projects in the area, including the massive Rampal coal-fired power plant, bypassing requirements for public participation and environmental impact assessment."

Dieter Bareis from the Climate and Environment Alliance Stuttgart (KUS) announces:

**"We condemn the construction of coal-fired power plants.** We are not just criticizing the developing country of Bangladesh. **We demand from developed countries that they give financial incentives to developing countries such as Bangladesh to invest in renewables rather than in coal-fired power plants. We sharply criticize the Stuttgart-based Fichtner GmbH, which is significantly involved in the construction of the Rampal coal-fired power plant, which endangers a UNESCO World Heritage Site and counteracts efforts to protect the climate.** In recent years, Fichtner has denied any public opinion on the criticism of the Raampal coal-fired power station. This is no longer acceptable. **We find unbearable that evidently the German bank, the Allianz group and the cooperative DZ bank from Frankfurt contribute to the financing of this coal power station, by buying bonds of the Indian Exim bank.** The insurance group Allianz is developing a coal-mining plan for the entire group and is also financing a coal-fired power station in Bangladesh - how does that fit in? "

In this context, KUS refers to a **public film screening in the Welthaus Stuttgart on Monday, July**

**15, 2019 at 19 o'clock in the Global Classroom.** It shows the movie "**Before us the flood - climate refugees in Bangladesh**". Bangladesh is one of the countries most affected by climate change. A conversation with the filmmaker Lourdes Picareta follows. Before the event, there is also the opportunity for a press conference with Dr. Dieter Reinhardt, who teaches politics at the Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences and researches resource conflicts in Bangladesh and Myanmar. (see [www.dieter-reinhardt.de/english/](http://www.dieter-reinhardt.de/english/)).

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