

# The Daily Star

Committed to PEOPLE'S RIGHT TO KNOW

Sunday, February 28, 2010 10:29 AM GMT+06:00

Published On: 2010-02-19

Front Page

## Bangladesh worst utiliser of Jica aid

Staff Correspondent

Finance Minister AMA Muhith felt embarrassed yesterday when a high official of the Japan government pointed out that Bangladesh is the worst utilizer of Japanese aid among the South Asian countries.

"I was a bit embarrassed by his remark. The official said our annual utilization of the aid money has plunged to the lowest in South Asia," the finance minister told journalists in his Bangladesh Secretariat office yesterday afternoon following a meeting with Director General of Japan International Cooperation Agency (Jica) Masataka Nakahara in the morning.

The finance minister said lately Bangladesh has been utilizing only six percent of Japan's annual commitment of loans and grants.

The issue was also discussed in the recently concluded Bangladesh Development Forum, Muhith said adding that it is a shame that the country is not being able to utilize the foreign assistance it is getting.

He said Japan is Bangladesh's largest bilateral donor, and the third largest among both multilateral and bilateral donors right after the World Bank, and Asian Development Bank.

He also said, "I like Japan a lot. When I was a government secretary back in 1981, even then Japan was our largest donor."

Replying to journalists' queries Muhith said he will soon hold meetings with the ministries concerned about the projects financed by Japan, to ensure quick utilization of Japanese fund.

Asked whether Japan has any resentment since although it provides the largest amount of bilateral assistance, contracts for most of the development projects go to Chinese companies, the finance minister said, "They might have some resentments, but they surely would not express that to us."

Japanese companies do not get work orders since in most cases their quotations are high, Muhith elaborated.

Japan did not get the contract for constructing Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge, but it still agreed to provide assistance for constructing Padma Bridge, he said.

Japan is one of the major international donors who agreed to finance the construction.

Japan however told the Bangladesh government that pre-qualification criteria for selection of bidders for Padma Bridge construction should be competitive, so the situation does not turn out to be that only one company ends up bidding for the job, Muhith added.