

Press release

Despite multiple deadline extensions 92% coal power plants could miss air pollution emission cut deadline

New Delhi, 7 December 2023 – Marking the eighth anniversary since the announcement of the first ever emission standards regulating SO₂ (sulphur dioxide), NO_x (nitrogen oxides), Hg (mercury), and water consumption in coal-based power generation units across India, the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA) conducted a comprehensive analysis. The findings reveal that over 92% of the active coal capacity in India continues to function without implementing adequate emission controls for SO₂ emissions.

The examination reveals the lack of progress despite an extension of deadline in September 2022. Within the past year (since December 2022), only 3.2 GW capacity distributed across 6 power generation units has incorporated SO₂ control technologies. This brings the cumulative capacity equipped with SO₂ control to a modest 16.5 GW, a fraction of the total installed capacity exceeding 213 GW in coal and lignite-based power plants across India. The analysis further discloses that more than 88 GW capacity is yet to award bids, with deadlines for meeting the emission standards looming for 8 GW in December 2025, 15 GW in December 2026, and the remaining 65 GW requiring retrofitting before December 2027.

Despite historical submissions from power generators, the Central Electricity Authority (CEA), and the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) indicating an installation timeframe of 18-36 months for Flue Gas Desulfurization (FGD) post the bid award date, the latest analysis underscores prolonged delays in FGD implementation by power plants. Notably, within NTPC's coal power capacity of 56.3 GW, monitored by CEA, only 3.6 GW across nine units has successfully installed FGD as of October 2023. This leaves a substantial 50.7 GW capacity distributed across 114 units at the bid award stage, with an additional six units (1.1 GW) at the stage where the Notice Inviting Tender (NIT) was issued, showcasing no progress since December 2020 for the units in this category.

The report sheds light on specific instances, revealing that out of the 40 NTPC units (22.5 GW) that awarded bids in 2018, only eight units with 3.2 GW capacity have completed FGD installations, while the remaining 32 units (19.4 GW) are yet to install the FGD, despite a passage of 60 months (5 years) since the bid award date. Furthermore, none of the 42 NTPC units (15.7 GW) that awarded

bids in 2019, nor the 35 units (12.5 GW) that awarded bids in 2020, have installed FGD, even after durations exceeding 48 months and 36 months, respectively, since the bid award date.

"Blanket extension of the deadline for all coal power plants without checking on their progress by MoEFCC and CPCB played a major role in derailment of emission controls from coal-based electricity generation units. NTPC is a clear example which showed ambition and leadership initially by awarding bids for most of its capacity but no progress and penalisation of others who didn't move on the pathway to installing FGD and repeated extensions have slowed NTPC down as well. Now even after five years of bid award, most of NTPC's capacity still lacks SO₂ emission control technology, which is a case for most of installed coal capacity in India," said Sunil Dahiya, South Asia Analyst at CREA.

He further adds, *"We need interim milestones to check the progress of FGD installation and a strict penalisation mechanism which acts as a deterrent for units which are not on track to meet the present deadlines. Emissions from coal-based power plants form a significant part of overall air pollution and central and state governments should act strictly and decisively to ensure implementation of emission standards which will play a key role in air pollution reduction."*

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Note(s) to editors

The CREA publication related to the press release can be found [here](#).

All CREA publications can be found [here](#).

About CREA

The Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA) is an independent research organisation focused on revealing the trends, causes, and health impacts, as well as the solutions, to air pollution. CREA was founded in December 2019 in Helsinki and has staff in several Asian and European countries. The organisation's work is funded through philanthropic grants and revenue from commissioned research.

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