

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2122
TO BE ANSWERED ON 18.12.2025

Easing of sulphur dioxide emission standards

2122. SMT. PRIYANKA CHATURVEDI:

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government has eased the sulphur dioxide emission standards for coal-fired thermal power plants;
- (b) if so, the scientific and environmental rationale behind this regulatory dilution, especially in view of the known public health impacts of such emissions;
- (c) whether any Environmental Impact Assessment or public health risk review was conducted before easing of these standards and if so, the details thereof;
- (d) if not, the reasons therefor; and
- (e) Government's study on implications of this policy reversal on India's commitments under the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) and international climate obligations?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE
(SHRI KIRTI VARDHAN SINGH)

(a) to (e): The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) notified emission standards, including SO₂ emission standards, for coal/lignite-fired Thermal Power Plants (TPPs) vide Notification dated 07.12.2015. Ministry has issued revised Notification vide G.S.R. 465 (E) dated 11.07.2025 regarding the applicability of SO₂ emission standards notified vide Notification dated 07.12.2015. Accordingly, the applicability and timelines for compliance of SO₂ emission standards by TPPs are as follows:

Category	Applicability of SO ₂ emission standards	Time limit for compliance
Category A (Plants within 10 km radius of NCR or cities having million plus population)	Mandatory	31.12.2027
Category B (Plants within 10 km radius of non-attainment cities or critically polluted areas)	To be decided on a case to case basis by the Central Government based upon the recommendations of the Expert Appraisal Committee (Thermal Projects). In case any TPP is considered for non-	31.12.2028

	applicability of SO ₂ emission standards, such TPP shall ensure meeting stack height as per Notification no. G.S.R. 742 (E) dated 30.08.1990.	
Category C (Other than those included in Category A and B)	Not applicable subject to condition of meeting stack height as per Notification no. G.S.R. 742 (E) dated 30.08.1990.	31.12.2029

The category-wise applicability of SO₂ emission standards in TPPs has been decided based on recommendations of Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) which inter alia examined the report of CSIR–National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (CSIR-NEERI) on the ‘Analysis of Historical Ambient Air Quality Data along with Emissions from Coal-based Thermal Power Plants for Developing a Decision Support System’, report of Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi on ‘Study to survey ambient atmospheric SO₂ concentrations in different categories of cities based on their proximity to thermal power plants (TPPs)’ and report of National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS) on the ‘Economic, Environmental, and Climate Impacts of Flue Gas Desulphurisation (FGD) in Thermal Power Plants in India’, and also based on the simulation modelling study of emissions from source thermal power plant for different scenarios/matrices carried out by the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), Pune.

The decision taken by the Central Government while issuing Notification dated 11.07.2025 is based on scientific approach, environmental sustainability and environmental benefits/loss in achieving SO₂ emission norms as well as techno-economic feasibility of implementing such control measures across all coal/lignite-based TPPs. This approach applies the precautionary principle for controlling and abating air pollution in densely populated and other air pollution-sensitive areas, while also factoring in the potential enhancement in electricity charges on account of heavy investment in procuring, planning, operation and maintenance cost of such control measures. This approach further demonstrates efficiency in resource conservation by avoiding additional consumption of water, auxiliary power, and limestone. It also takes into account the increase in carbon footprint/CO₂ emissions resulting from the operation of such control measures, as well as the added cost of mining and transportation of limestone required for such pollution control measures.

It may be seen from the aforementioned table that the SO₂ standards are mandatorily applicable in the case of all Category A TPPs located within 10 km of NCR or million plus cities where as its applicability is to be decided on a case by case basis for Category B plants and exemption has been provided for only Category C plants. However, in all such cases where SO₂ emission standards are not being made applicable, TPPs shall ensure compliance of stack height criteria notified vide Notification number GSR 742 (E) dated the 30.08.1990 governing SO₂ emissions from TPPs to aid proper dispersion of pollutants and mitigate environmental impacts. TPPs are required to comply with the emission standards notified by MoEFCC within the prescribed time limits, failing which environmental compensation shall be imposed on the non-compliant TPP units for operation beyond the prescribed time limit at prescribed rates.
