GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF POWER

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.310
ANSWERED ON 02.02.2026

EXEMPTION OF THERMAL POWER PLANTS FROM INSTALLING FGD SYSTEMS

310 SHRI PRAMOD TIWARI:

Will the Minister of **POWER** be pleased to state:

(a) whether a number of thermal power plants have been exempted from installing Flue Gas Desulphurisation (FGD) Systems;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor;

(c) whether any study has been commissioned/conducted to assess the impact of exemption;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) safeguards put in place to enforce appropriate emission controls and cost- effective approach to pollution control?

A N S W E R

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF POWER

(SHRI SHRIPAD NAIK)

(a) to (d) : The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) notified emission standards [including Sulphur Dioxide (SO_2)] for coal / lignite based Thermal Power Plants (TPPs) vide its Notification dated 07.12.2015. Further, MoEF&CC vide Notification dated 31.03.2021 prescribed for categorization of TPPs into three categories i.e. Category A, B and C for compliance of the emission standards. Accordingly, TPPs were classified as follows:

Sl. No.	Category	Location/area	No. of TPPs	No. of Units	Capacity (MW)
1	Category-A	Within 10 km radius of National Capital Region or cities having million plus population	17	66	20,577
2	Category-B	Within 10 km radius of Critically Polluted Areas or Non-attainment cities	25	72	24,057
3	Category-C	Other than those included in category A and B	149	462	1,66,885.5
Total			**191**	**600**	**2,11,519.5**

Note: As per 2011 census of India

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The SO_2 emission standards prescribed in MoEF&CC Notification dated 07.12.2015 have been reviewed by the Central Government taking into consideration the various representations received regarding exemption or relaxation in timelines of these standards due to limited availability of technology providers, its techno-economic feasibility, negative impact of COVID-19 pandemic on supply chain, price escalation due to high demand and low supplies, low SO_2 concentration in ambient air and heavy burden on consumers due to increase in electricity price etc.

Besides, the scientific studies conducted by independent research institutions regarding effectiveness & rationale behind these standards and its role in overall ambient air pollution of the region were also considered to evaluate the need of universal applicability and enforcement of these standards.

In view of the above, MoEF&CC has issued a Notification on 11.07.2025 regarding the applicability of SO_2 emission standards notified vide Notification dated 07.12.2015. Accordingly, the applicability and timelines for compliance of SO_2 emission standards by TPPs are tabulated below:

Category	**Applicability of SO_2 emission standards**	**Timelines for Compliance (Non- retiring units)**	**Last date for retirement of units for exemption from compliance**
Category A	Mandatory	31.12.2027	31.12.2030
Category B	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 exemption from SO_2 emission standards, such TPP shall ensure meeting of stack height as per notification no. G.S.R. 742 (E) dated 30.08.1990.	31.12.2028	
Category C	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	

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The category wise applicability of SO_2 emission standards in TPPs have been decided based on detailed scientific studies and analysis of ambient SO_2 concentrations across the country, including areas near TPPs done by Indian Institute of Technology (IIT)-Delhi, Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR)-National Environment Engineering Research Institute (NEERI) and National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS)-Bengaluru. This approach applies the precautionary principle for controlling and abating air pollution in densely populated and other air pollution sensitive areas, while also emphasizing on resource conservation by avoiding additional consumption of water, auxiliary power, and limestone, and avoiding the increase in carbon footprint/CO_2 emissions resulting from the operation of deployed control measures, as well as mining and transportation of limestone required for these measures.

(e): All TPPs are required to comply with the emission norms as notified by MoEF&CC. The TPPs are regulated through grant of Consent to Establish and/or Consent to Operate under the Water (Prevention And Control Of Pollution) Act, 1974 and Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981 by concerned State Pollution Control Board (SPCB). These Acts also include penal provisions for non-compliance of environmental standards.

To comply with the stack emission standards notified by MoEF&CC vide Notification dated 07.12.2015 and its subsequent amendments, TPPs are adopting technologies such as upgradation of Electrostatic Precipitators (ESPs) for compliance with Particulate Matter (PM) standards, NO_x Combustion Modification for NO_x emission standards, and installation of Flue Gas Desulphurization (FGD) systems for SO_2 emission standards.

Moreover, in case of non-compliance beyond the prescribed timelines in MoEF&CC Notification dated 11.07.2025, the following Environmental Compensation can also be levied on non-compliant TPPs (for both SO_2 and parameters other than SO_2):

Non-Compliant operation beyond the Timeline	**Environmental Compensations (Rs. per unit electricity generated)**
0-180 days	0.20
181-365 days	0.30
366 days and beyond	0.40

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