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The government has issued directions to 79 coal-based power plants in category A to curb the emission of Sulphur and Nitrogen Dioxide gases by the end of this month. In contrast, the rest 517 units have been given time relaxations. The said power plants give out about 20,500 MW in numerous cities across 10 states, including Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, and UP. These are major projects which are owned by companies like NTPC, TATA Power, Torrent Power Apraava India and various other state companies of Haryana, Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu.

According to the previous guidelines, the failure to comply with the norms by December 2022 would have led to the closure of such plants, but due to reasons such as the pandemic and trade restrictions, the deadline has been extended till December 2024 upon the request of the Ministry of Power. The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) has prepared a revised list to categorise the thermal power plants and specified details for non-compliance. The Environment Ministry has categorised the thermal power plants into three groups;

Category- A, these are plants established within a 10 Km radius of National Capital Region & around cities with a population of more than 1 million. The penalty for Category A units would be 10 paise /unit of electricity for the first 180 days of Non-compliance. Then it would be raised to 15 Paise/unit from day 181 to day 365 and 20 paise/unit from day 366 onwards. A total of 596 power plants are near highly populated cities. Cities like Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai, Nagpur, Vizag, Vijayawada and Kota are marked in Category A of the new norms.

Category- B plants which are established in the 10 Km radius of cities which are either critically polluted or non-attainment cities. The penalty for Category-B ranges between 7 paise/ unit to 15 paise /unit. Sixty-Eight projects fall under this category, and they have a capacity of 22Gw and these projects have been given time until December 2023 to comply with the Flue-gas Desulphurisation norms. These projects are functioning in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Odisha etc. and are owned by NTPC, GMR, Ind Bharat and Energen.

Category-C plants are the ones which do not fall under the ambit of either Category A or B shall come under Category C. The penalty for category C ranges from 0.05 paise/unit to 10 paise/unit. A total of Four forty-nine power plants fall under this category, and they are required to install the Sulphur dioxide and Nitrogen dioxide control gears and must comply with these norms by December 2024.



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