Ecological Impact of Coal Transportation - Goa

What is the issue?

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- Ideas for reducing the ecological footprint of coal are majorly focused at the mines level.
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- Pollution caused by the transport of coal hasn’t got the deserved attention.
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What is Goa’s case?

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- Coal is mainly imported into India at Marmugoa port (Goa) from Australia, Indonesia and South Africa.
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- Goa Pollution Control Board’s 2015-16 report, states that the PM10 reading of Mormugao port exceeded permissible limits.
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- Official records also show that coal in excess of permissible limits is being handled at the Mormugao port.
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- This coal is mainly used up in steel plants of Karnataka and transport happens by road or rail.
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- 34,200 tonnes of coal is transported each day through the rail route from the Marmugoa to various destinations in Karnataka.
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- The nearly 400-km journey of this fossil fuel has been found to have profound ecological impacts and is risking habitations.
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- Coal dust has also pushed up incidents of respiratory disorder and is threatening fragile forests, paddy fields, streams and rivers.
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What is the way ahead?

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- There have been various regulatory lapses and violations in coal imports at Marmagoa Port, which needs to be addressed.
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- This acquires greater urgency given that Mormugao port plans to more than double its coal imports by 2030.
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- Environmental audits have blamed the transport of coal for the high pollution levels in coal-rich Jharkhand and Maharastra too.
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- Although government has been emphasising on renewable coal is expected to hold primacy for the foreseeable future (60% by 2022).
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- It is hence imperative to evolve a comprehensive policy to ensure that coal is transported in environmentally sensitive ways.
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Source: Indian Express

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