

Exemption of Installation of Flue Gas Desulphurization (FGD) systems

Prelims: Current Events of National and International Importance

Why in the news?

Recently, the Environment Ministry has exempted the majority of India's coal-fired plants from mandatorily installing Flue Gas Desulphurisation (FGD) systems, which are designed to cut sulphur dioxide (SO₂) emissions.

- **Original Mandate, 2017** - The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) mandated that Required all coal-fired plants to install FGD systems by 2017 to reduce sulphur dioxide (SO₂) emissions.
- **Limited Compliance** - As of July 2025, only a small percentage of power plants (approximately 8%) have installed FGD systems, with most installations by public sector companies like NTPC.
- **Reasons for Delays** - Challenges such as high capital costs, limited vendor availability, space constraints, and the COVID-19 pandemic have contributed to delays in implementation.
- **Recent Policy Changes** - The Environment Ministry has exempted 79% of India's coal-fired power plants from the mandatory installation of Flue Gas Desulphurization (FGD) systems.
- A recent gazette notification restricted the mandatory installation of FGD systems to plants located within 10 kilometres of cities with a population exceeding one million.
- **Exemptions** - Plants located beyond this 10km radius are now largely exempt from the mandatory FGD installation.
- **Case-by-Case Evaluation** - Plants in critically polluted areas or "non-attainment cities" (cities exceeding air quality standards for five consecutive years) will be evaluated individually for FGD requirements.
- **Impact of Relaxation** - This policy shift is expected to reduce electricity costs.
- **Continuing Debate** - There is ongoing discussion regarding the necessity and effectiveness of FGD systems, with some studies suggesting Indian coal has a **lower sulphur content** and that SO₂ levels near plants are already within permissible limits.
- **Alternative Perspectives** - Some researchers argue for a more focused approach, recommending that FGD systems be mandatory only for plants using imported or high-sulphur coal.
- They emphasize prioritizing other measures like controlling particulate matter pollution.

Reference

[The Hindu| Exemption of Installation of Flue Gas Desulphurization \(FGD\) systems](#)

