India's Emission Standards

Why in news?

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A week after the budget speech which included the Centre’s commitment to promote clean energy, the government has developed cold feet over emission norms for thermal power plants.

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What is the need for reduction of emission?

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- Coal is a major culprit for climate change. It powers more than 80% of the electricity consumed in the country.
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- The Paris agreement hinges on voluntary targets, or the Intended Nationally Determined Commitments (INDCs).
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- India’s INDCs relies greatly renewable energy.
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- But it will still require thermal power plants to generate 60% of its energy requirements in 2030.
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- That makes reducing emissions from these coal-fired plants crucial to the country’s Paris commitments.
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- In the run-up to the Paris climate change meet in 2015, the government stressed on reducing the share of this fossil fuel in the country’s energy mix and using it in a climate friendly manner especially reducing the emissions from thermal power stations.
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- Over 140 such stations were assigned targets for improving energy efficiency.
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- But now the government finds these standards too stringent.
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- This raise questions about India’s commitment to its Paris targets.
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Why the voluntary measures are implemented?

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- The lack of coordination between different government agencies that has affected almost every environment-related initiative in the country has dogged the endeavour to reduce the climate footprints of thermal power plants.
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- In 2015 the National Thermal Power Corporation opposed the emission norms for thermal plants were being discussed.
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- The government set aside the objections of the biggest player in the sector and submitted its **INDC document to the United Nations Framework Convention of Climate Change.**
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- The environment ministry is also gave clearances to new plants without specifying the new standards, well after it had the norms in place.
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What is the way ahead?

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- The failure of thermal power plants to comply with the emission norms does not show the country’s preparedness in good light.
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- Most thermal power plants in the country work at efficiencies below 33%.
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- There are still three years before India has to comply with its Paris climate targets.
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- While there has been much convincing talk on emission targets for these plants, the technological inputs required for the purpose have received very little attention.
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- It is time the country braces for the challenge.
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Source: The Indian Express

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