

Media Release

Maharashtra to undertake coal phase down study across all power plants in State: Aaditya Thackeray

During his Nandgaon visit Thackeray assured locals of permanent closure of both Nandgaon, Waregaon ash bunds and their speedy restoration

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Nagpur, India: The Maharashtra government has decided to conduct a comprehensive study to determine how ageing and polluting coal-fired power facilities in the state may be phased down in a systematic manner.

Aaditya Thackeray, Cabinet Minister (Environment, Tourism & Protocol), Maharashtra made this announcement among several other announcements (**listed below**) on Monday while visiting the recently shut down Nandgaon ash pond located near the Khaparkheda Thermal Power Station (KTPS).

“After receiving multiple complaints especially from women of Nandgaon and taking action, I decided to take the stock of ground situation. I have directed Nandgaon ash pond to be restored to its original state within the next 15 days. Nandgaon & even the Waregaon ash bunds both will be permanently shut,” said Thackeray.

He also added that pollution control measures including installation of flue gas desulphurisation (FGD) for air pollution will be set up at all power plants across State, starting with Koradi-Khaparkheda. “We will ensure 100% fly ash utilisation as per Central Government norms. The fly ash will also be used for infrastructure projects,” he stated.

Meanwhile, Maharashtra will be conducting a comprehensive study to determine how ageing & polluting coal-fired power plants may be phased down in a systematic manner. “An audit of all power plants in Maharashtra for pollution control measures will be done. The power plants that are not meeting prescribed standards will face decisive action. A mitigation plan will be developed for this,” said Thackeray adding that further details would be announced after the sanctioning process of the study was completed.

Maharashtra’s decision to conduct this study holds significance in light of announcements made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the Conference of Parties (COP26) at Glasgow setting a 2070 Net Zero goal for the country.

Maharashtra currently has an installed capacity of 13,602 MW of which coal-fired thermal power accounts for nearly 75% or 10,170 MW, according to Maharashtra State Power Generation

Company (MAHAGENCO). State-owned thermal power stations include - Chandrapur, Koradi, Khaperkheda, Nashik, Parli, Bhusawal and Paras.

Locals hail Environmental Justice

Nandgaon residents who met Thackeray highlighted how their livelihood had been impacted due to the fly ash. However, they hailed the decisions taken by the Minister of assuring permanent closure of both Nandgaon and Waregaon ash ponds as well as their restoration. Locals also told the Minister how their livelihood had been impacted due to fly ash pollution.

“I applaud the Minister's decision to halt ash disposal at Nandgaon. My biggest fear remains the flooding that this ash bund is causing in our community and on the fields. In the village, there is a lot of unemployment right now, so I urged the minister to pay special attention to it. People whose farms are outside the ash bund are all affected, regardless of whose land it is. For a long time, the entire community has been in misery,” said **Sonali Manoj Varkhade, Sarpanch from Nandgaon**

After hearing the plight from a group of women, led by the Sarpanch of Nandgaon village, the Minister said that in next 10 days, a plan will be prepared for the upliftment & employment opportunities for locals.

Leena Buddhe from the Centre for Sustainable Development, which conducted a water pollution study with Manthan Adhyayan Kendra and Asar recommending an immediate halt to the discharge of pollutants from the power plants and ash ponds, accompanied Thackeray during his visit to Nandgaon on Monday. Buddhe said what happened at Nandgaon was historic as no minister had ever taken such a strong stand against power plants causing pollution.

“People of nandgaon are very happy as the minister patiently heard the issues of the community and hailed the decision to permanently shut the ash bund. The land should now be restored and a detailed plan on the restoration should be chalked out by involving the villagers. We feel that the work has just begun and it's a long way to go. However we all witnessed environmental justice today,” she said.

ADDITIONAL QUOTES

Meanwhile, a 2021 report by research group Climate Risk Horizons suggested savings opportunities of up to ₹75,000 crores over the next decade through the quick retirement of 4,020 MW of old coal power plants by 2022. "It's encouraging that Maharashtra is examining the issue

of a coal phase down. Retrofitting old coal units at Koradi, Khaperkheda, Nasik and Chandrapur to control air and water pollution will cost thousands of crores and increase electricity costs. On the other hand, a planned phase down and replacement with cheaper renewable energy and battery storage will reduce the cost of power, address the pollution and health issues residents are suffering from and create new employment opportunities," said **Ashish Fernandes, Chief Executive Officer, Climate Risk Horizons.**

“Maharashtra is taking a bold step by being one of the first states in the country to consider coal phase down. Given the current overcapacity situation in state with respect to coal power, it would not only be accelerating climate goals and protect public health from dirty coal power but also financially beneficial for the state. It would be important to have a clear time bound targets that are rooted on the climate emergency and the public health crisis the state is facing,” said **Nandikesh Sivalingam, Director, Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA).**

Photos





