

ENVIRONMENTAL CLEARANCES

OF COAL-FIRED POWER PLANTS IN INDIA 2021

Environmental Clearances granted to coal-based power plants are a useful indicator to study power generation trends in India. This is in view of the fact that grant of prior Environmental Clearance is prerequisite for commissioning construction activities. The coal-fired thermal power plants are appraised under activity 1(d) of the EIA Notification (2006). Environmental Clearance is the foremost requirement for establishment of new as well as expansion of existing coal power projects. This is followed by several other clearances and permissions such as consent under the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981 and the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974, among others. Projects that involve forest land are also mandated to obtain Forest Clearances under Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980.

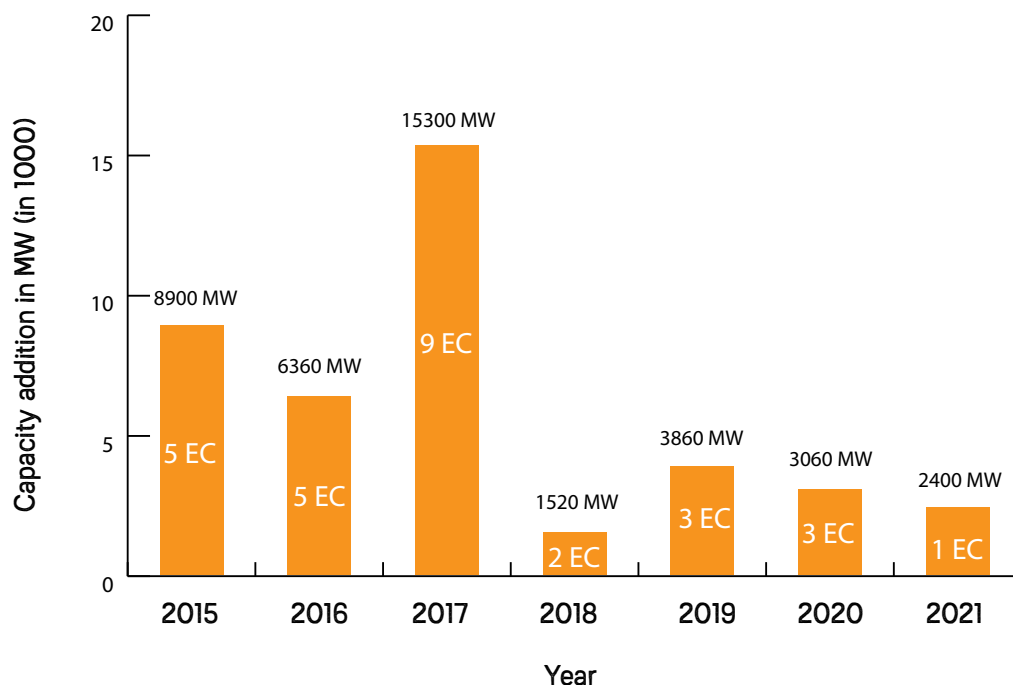
All other required clearances/permissions are processed only on the basis of grant or rejection of the Environmental Clearance (EC) to a proposed project. Thus, tracking the number and capacity of projects granted clearances gives an accurate picture of upcoming changes in power generation at the planning stage.

Previous analysis of ECs to coal-fired power plants of more than 500 MW capacity for the years 2014 to 2018 shows decline in count and individual capacities of upcoming projects (LIFE, 2018)*. Similarly, during the year 2019-2020 similar decreasing trend has been observed. The present report is part of the same series i.e., tracking the EC granted for non-captive coal-fired thermal power plants by using the information available on PARIVESH portal of the Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change (MoEFCC) in the calendar year 2021. An attempt is also made to understand the trend on EC granted to captive thermal power plants since 2015.

Environmental Clearance granted in terms of capacity

In the current study period (January 2021 to December 2021), two coal-fired power plants, one captive and one non-captive, were granted environmental clearance. The capacity addition, considering only the non-captive thermal power plant is 2,400 MW. The project is also a “greenfield project”. Capacity addition during 2015 to 2021 has been represented in the following graph which clearly shows decreasing trend.

Figure 1: Number and capacity addition of coal-fired power plants during 2015-2021



* <https://thelifeindia.org.in/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Coal-fired-power-plant-justified.pdf>

The “greenfield project” mentioned above is 3x800 MW NLC Talabira Thermal Power Project (NTTTP) based on Supercritical Technology at Kumbhari and Tareikela Villages in District Jharsuguda and Thalloid Village in District Sambalpur, Odisha by NLC India Limited (NLCIL). This project received Terms of Reference (ToR) on 27.12.2017. The total land requirement for the project is 585.58 ha including 243.621 ha for the Main Plant, 101.981 ha for the Greenbelt, 137.593 ha for the Ash Pond, 35.612 ha for the water reservoir and 20.234 ha for the township. The Ib Valley, a critically polluted area is 4 km away from the project site.

With regard to EC granted to captive coal fired thermal power plant, data of seven years does not show any trend and also does not show any correlation between the EC granted to captive and non-captive coal fired thermal power plants. Figure-2 shows number of EC granted along with capacity addition.

Other than the projects granted Environmental Clearances, it is important to also look at the number of projects that have been granted Terms of Reference (ToR) for preparing EIA reports. While these projects may or may not be approved by the Ministry, keeping tally of the grant of ToR helps us reckon future trends. It is important to note that no Coal Fired Thermal Power projects were granted ToR in 2021.

Figure- 2: Number and capacity addition of captive power plants during 2015-2021

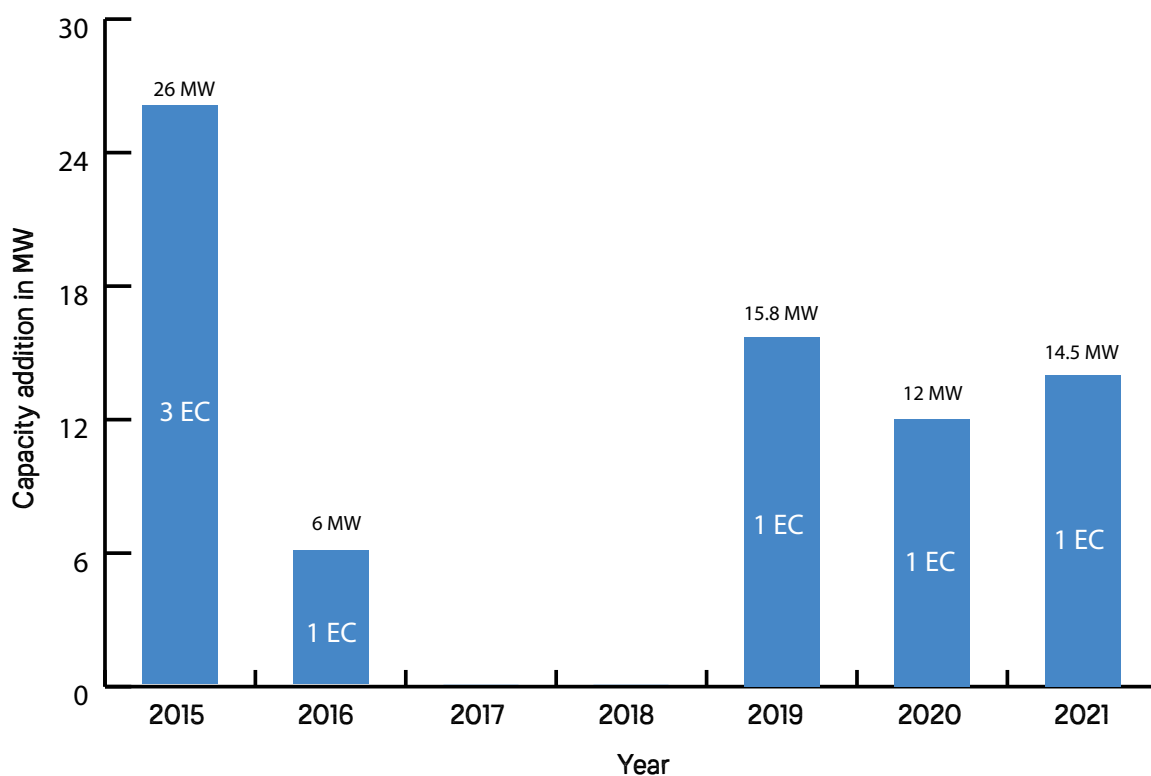


photo: pixabay.com



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