

As heatwave surges, govt scrambles to fill coal need

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NEW DELHI: As India witnesses one of the hottest summers in recent memory, electricity usage for fans, coolers and ACs has broken records, but power utilities have struggled to meet the increased demand amid a shortage of coal, prompting emergency response by authorities at the Centre and states.

The country on Friday saw a record peak demand of 207,111 MW. Power shortage continued to remain high at 8,120 MW on Friday, which was 10,778 MW on Thursday.

In the past seven days, Rajasthan and Haryana have failed to meet peak power demand as shortfalls rose to 2,229 MW (April 27) and 1,355 MW (April 29), according to reports prepared by the Union power ministry between April 23 and 29.

From Friday, states such as Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh too started recording shortfalls of up to 1,170 MW, even as the situation seemed to ease a bit in Maharashtra, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh after they boosted coal imports and stepped up purchases from power exchanges.

The coal inventory at thermal power plants was reviewed at a meeting chaired by Union power



Coal being loaded in goods train in Peeparwar on Friday.

ANI

minister RK Singh. He also took stock of Delhi's power situation separately after chief minister Arvind Kejriwal and Delhi power minister Satyendar Jain flagged low coal inventory.

Although Delhi so far has not seen peak power shortfall, Singh on Saturday said all distribution companies of the national capital will get as much as power as needed.

He also took note that the three Delhi government-run gas power plants are running at partial capacity. The reason for this was low supply and increased cost gas, Delhi power department officials said, requesting anonymity. However, minister Singh urged the

Delhi government to ramp up power generation, while assuring adequate supply from GAIL India.

On Saturday, states and the opposition continued to blame the Centre for the coal crisis, which has been aggravated by the steep increase in power demand amid the unusually high temperatures across the country. April this year was the hottest in 122 years.

Officials in the coal and power ministries, however, said Coal India is not resorting to restricted supply despite non-payment of dues totalling ₹7,918.72 crore by several state power generation utilities. Maharashtra's power generation company owed at least ₹2,608.07 crore, West Bengal's

₹1,506.97 crore, Jharkhand at least ₹1,018.22 crore, and Tamil Nadu ₹823.92 crore, HT reported on April 29. All four are opposition-ruled states.

They were followed by Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-ruled Madhya Pradesh, which owes ₹531.42 crore. Other BJP-led states such as Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Haryana had dues of ₹213.79 crore, ₹134.60 crore and ₹38.24 crore, respectively.

State power utilities of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu also owed dues amounting to ₹1,370.82 crore to Singareni Collieries owned by the central government, the coal ministry stated on Saturday.

Taking a dig at the Centre over the power crisis, Congress leader P Chidambaram said on Saturday that the ministries of coal, railway and power are desperately inventing excuses to hide their "monumental" incompetence.

"Abundant coal, large rail network, unutilized capacity in thermal plants. Yet, there is an acute power shortage the Modi government cannot be blamed for. It is because of 60 years of Congress rule," he said in a tweet.

"If they believed the yarn that we were witnessing a V-shaped recovery, they would have stepped up coal production and coal imports," he said in another tweet.

City has all the power it needs, claims Centre

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Even with the peak demand rising to a record 6,094MW, there is absolutely no problem with power supply in Delhi and all central generation utilities supplying electricity to the national capital have enough fuel stock to meet additional demand, power minister RK Singh said on Saturday.

Data from national grid operator POSOCO shows no shortage in meeting the peak energy demand. Delhi's energy requirement met on April 29, the day its peak demand made a new record, stood at 123.6 million units.

Singh reviewed the fuel stocks at power plants, especially those that supply to Delhi, and directed NTPC and DVC to fully meet the demand from the capital's three distribution companies. All central power stations supplying to Delhi have adequate coal stock and are getting supply daily.

In addition, gas utility GAIL has been asked to make natural gas available from all sources so that the Delhi government can operate its GTPS, Pragati and Bawana gas-fired power plants at a higher capacity.

NTPC has also been advised to offer normative declared capacity from its gas-based power plants to Delhi's discoms as per their allocations under respective power purchase pacts.

Delhi has 6,892MW installed generation capacity available to it. Its own installed capacity is pegged at 3,056MW.

The state government had surrendered its share of power from NTPC's Dadri Stage-I plant (840MW). Still, allocation from the central generating stations is 3,806MW, while allocation from unallocated power is 30MW.

The power demand of Delhi is met mainly from allocation from central power stations.

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POWER DISCOMS IN THE CAPITAL

If coal is available then why are trains being cancelled? Opp.

IMD closely monitoring instead of watching situation

VINEETA PANDEY
NEW DELHI, APRIL 30

Union minister for power and new and renewable energy R.K. Singh on Saturday reviewed the coal stock position in thermal power plants, including the plants supplying power to distribution companies of Delhi, and directed that Delhi will get as much power as requisitioned by them as per their demand.

"NTPC and DVC have been directed to give full availability as per the requirements of the DISCOMS. GAIL India has also assured to make gas available from all sources to gas-based power plants in Delhi. NTPC has also been advised to offer the normative declared capacity to the Delhi discoms as per their allocations from gas-based power plants," said a statement from power ministry even as Delhi government raised a red flag over a possible power crisis looming over the city and NCR.

However, the power ministry said there has been no shortage of electricity supply to Delhi. "As per data provided by Power System Operation Corporation on April 29, 2022 the peak demand has gone up to 6,096 MW and there has been no shortage in meeting the maximum demand. The entire energy requirements are also being met in Delhi which is about 123.6 MU," the ministry said.

India's peak power demand touched 207.1 GW. As on April 28, 100 out of 165 operational coal plants had less than critical stock (less than 25% of required amount) of coal. The Centre has rushed extra coal through special trains to overcome this shortage and has can-



Police personnel and locals gather after 14 coaches of a goods train hauling coal from Kanpur to Ghaziabad got derailed in Etawah district Saturday. — PTI

celled several passenger trains to prioritise coal movement. At a time when several states are staring at an acute power crisis, 15 bogies of a goods train carrying coal got derailed near Etawah in Uttar Pradesh.

Attacking the government over the coal shortage, Congress leader P. Chidambaram said in sarcasm, "Abundant coal, large rail network, unutilised capacity in thermal plants. Yet, there is an acute power shortage. The Modi government cannot be blamed. It is because of 60 years of Congress rule! There is no incompetence in the ministries of coal, railways or power. The blame lies with past Congress ministers of the said departments! Government has found the perfect solution: cancel passenger trains and run coal rakes! Modi hai, mumkin hai."

Several chief ministers from non-BJP ruled states who were present in the capital on Saturday to attend a judiciary related conference expressed unhappiness over the handling of matters by the Centre. The BJP ruled CM

though had a muted response. "We are continuously working towards the power crisis. We have improved the power situation in the last one week. We have undertaken crisis management. We are improving the situation (of power crisis)," said Uttarakhand CM Pushkar Singh Dhama.

However, according to Union coal minister Prahlad Joshi there has been an increase of about 37% in coal production and 43% in offtake. "We have achieved record coal production and offtake in 2021-22. Coal production and offtake in 2013-14 were 566 MT and 572 MT respectively. In FY22, coal production and offtake is 777 MT and 818 MT respectively," he said.

Chhattisgarh CM Bhupesh Baghel countered the Union minister saying, "If there is no shortage (of coal), why were the passenger train services shut? 23 goods trains from Chhattisgarh were cancelled, then when I talked to the railway minister, 6 trains were started... The Centre must ensure coal availability with power plants."