

Standing Committee Report Summary

Infrastructure Development to Augment Washed Coal Production

- The Standing Committee on Coal, Mines and Steel (Chair: Mr Anurag Singh Thakur) presented its report on 'Infrastructure Development to Augment Washed Coal Production' on July 29, 2026. The Committee examined the coal washing ecosystem in the country and the roadmap for augmenting washery infrastructure and washed coal production. Indian domestic coal has high ash content, ranging from 25% to 45%. Such coal has lower energy content affecting combustion efficiency, equipment performance, and pollution levels. Washed coal refers to the coal that has undergone a mechanical process to separate impurities. Key observations and recommendations of the Committee include:
 - **Demand-supply gap in washed coking coal:** The National Steel Policy, 2017 targets crude steel production of 300 million tonnes (MT) by 2030-31. The Committee noted that meeting this target would require 48 MT of washed coking coal (a grade of coal used mainly in steel industry). However, domestic supply is projected at 23 MT by 2030. It recommended the Ministry of Coal and the Ministry of Steel to develop a time-bound strategy to expand coal washery infrastructure and facilitate use of domestic coking coal in the steel sector.
 - **Performance of existing washeries:** The Committee noted that only five of the 13 washeries operated by the Coal India Limited meet the prescribed 95% efficiency benchmark. The remaining washeries are underperforming as they have outlived their designed operational life. It noted that new washeries have been created by the private sector over the years. However, a significant number of private sectors washeries are either underutilised or idle due to factors such as poor availability of suitable raw coal linkages. The Committee recommended: (i) time-bound modernisation of ageing washeries including through monetisation, and (ii) greater utilisation of idle capacity of private washeries through public private collaboration.
 - **Adoption of new technology:** The Committee noted that major coal-producing countries have moved to deploying advanced coal beneficiation technologies. Coal beneficiation is a mechanical process that cleans raw mined coal by removing unwanted rock, ash, sulphur, and moisture. These technologies include dry washing and advanced dense-media separation systems. It observed that there is substantial scope for Indian washeries to adopt these technologies. It also noted that
- pilot projects using some of these technologies are underway in the country. It recommended: (i) scaling up advanced technologies beyond the pilot or research and development stage, and (ii) technology adoption roadmap for promotion of advanced and next generation dry beneficiation systems in Indian washeries.
- **Environmental and forest clearance delays:** The Committee recommended expediting environmental and forest clearances for coking coal mines. It further recommended that the Ministry coordinate with the Environment Ministry and state governments to resolve these matters in a time-bound manner.
- **Coal transportation and logistics infrastructure:** The Committee noted challenges in the coal transportation infrastructure such as lack of mechanised loading facilities in older washeries. In addition, several existing coal washeries are located away from pitheads, resulting in higher logistics costs and additional burden on rail and road infrastructure. It also noted that new washeries of Coal India Limited are being equipped with a fully mechanised evacuation system. Further, 33 critical rail lines are planned to be developed to support coal evacuation. The Committee recommended: (i) scaling up mechanised evacuation facilities (ii) timely completion of identified rail lines, and (iii) establishing washeries near pitheads, wherever feasible.
- **Washery rejects and water use:** The Washery Reject Policy, 2021 seeks to promote the use of washery rejects (byproducts of coal beneficiation) in areas such as power generation and construction. The Committee noted that the volume of washery rejects is expected to increase with expansion of coal beneficiation facilities. Further, water consumption is also expected to rise. It noted that while new washeries are designed with water recycling systems, no such norms are specified for existing ones. The Committee recommended: (i) periodic audits and digital tracking mechanism to ensure compliance with policies, and (ii) formulation of norms for water recycling for all washeries.
- **Role of the Coal Controller's Organisation (CCO):** The Committee observed that CCO's mandate is limited to permitting reject disposal, with no role in monitoring washery production or coal quality. It recommended obtaining services of specialised technical experts to strengthen CCO's capacity for providing technical oversight and support.

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