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Title: Need to set up a big Thermal Power Plant instead of many plants, as proposed, for various places in the Vidarbha region of Maharashtra.

SHRI VILAS MUTTEMWAR (NAGPUR): The Government is in the process of granting approval to proposals submitted by Independent Power Producing Companies (IPP's) to set up 132 Thermal Power Plants of nearly 86,470 MW of capacity in the Vidarbha region. It will aggravate the already acute water shortage problem in which only 30% of the total irrigation potential has been developed. When the farmers of the region are already suffering due to lack of irrigation facilities, the State Government is allocating water supply to these thermal power plants.

With the setting up of 132 coal based power plants Vidarbha will be the most polluted region of the country. The coal based power plants are considered biggest sources of air pollution, health hazard and emit huge quantity of Fly Ash, toxic metals like Mercury, radio activity, Sulphur-dioxide and Carbon Dioxide. There are reports of cancer causing uranium in drinking water of various villages in Bhatinda District of Punjab State due to the hazardous discharge from thermal power plants located there, which is already being probed by the Ministry of Environment and Forests.

The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) has stipulated approximately 1 acre of land per MW of installed thermal capacity is required for ash disposal. 132 thermal power plants 86,470 MW capacity will collectively require close to 90,000 acres of fertile land, 3,600 MM cube of raw water per day and burn over 18,00,000 Tonnes of coal per day and generate over 7,20,000 tonnes of ash per day. These plants will have a cumulative catastrophic impact on the natural resources, environment and health of the people of the region.

I would urge that the Government to assess the cumulative impact on the environment and the natural resources due to concentration of a large number of thermal power plants in one region before granting environmental clearances to any project.

I would also urge upon the Government to have a realistic view of this serious problem of concentration of a large number of environmentally unsustainable thermal power plants in the Vidarbha region by reviewing the entire policy of setting up of large thermal power plants in one particular region.