

# Have fly ash brick units or shut down

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THE STATE environment department and the pollution control board (PCB) have decided to crack down on thermal power plants, threatening shut-down if they fail to set up their own fly ash brick manufacturing units immediately.

The existing plants will be denied annual renewal of the mandatory "consent to operate" certificate by the PCB unless they install their own fly ash bricks manufacturing units. Even new power generation plants won't also be given the stipulated "consent to establish" permission unless they themselves use fly ash for brick manufacture, warned M.L. Meena, environment department principal secretary.

Concerned at the worsening environmental pollution by fly ash spraying and angry over the power units' continued defiance of the repeated government orders, the environment department has set a deadline of three weeks before which definite undertakings would have to be

submitted for scientific disposal of fly ash by all the offending units.

Fly ash has already turned a few thousand cultivable acres into barren fields in Bengal that is a chronic agriculture land-starved state. Manufacture of mud bricks of over 150 crore pieces annually on the hand

caused loss of topsoil that has already had disastrous effects on the state's critical agriculture.

Power plants have also been asked to submit their five-year perspective plans so that recurrence of such horrible mishaps as sinking of several huge fly ash-loaded barges in the Ganges off Kolkata port could be avoided. The river's unique aqua resources, especially hilsa fish, have been severely affected.

Fly ash is now being exported in large quantities to Bangladesh for its cement units by these barges by CESC and a few other power

plants, Meena pointed out. Increasing use of raw fly ash will also be ensured by compelling more than 1,500 brick-manufacturing units across the state.

## POWER ABUSE

Thermal power plants illegally dumping, disposing of fly ash generated by them

Power plants have not set up fly ash brick manufacturing units, thus violating Environment (Protection) Act, 1986

Power plants failing to set up fly ash brick units to be denied renewal of 'consent to operate' certificate and new ones will not be issued 'consent to establish' order

1,500 registered brick-manufacturing units producing 150 crore brick pieces annually destroy topsoil of several thousand acres cultivable land.