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Power plants get 5-star rating in state pollution study

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NAGPUR: Nineteen out of 48 industries surveyed in Vidarbha have been given 5-star rating for being 'least polluting' while two have got 1-star for being the 'most polluting'. Industries of the region have fared better than Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) where 29 out of 50 industries were found to be emitting excessive particulate matter.

This was brought to the fore by the star-rating programme, the first of its kind project jointly taken up by the Maharashtra Pollution Control Board (MPCB), Energy Policy Institute at the University of Chicago (EPIC-India), the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (JPAL), Evidence for Policy Design (EPoD) at Harvard Kennedy School and Tata Centre for Development (TCD).

As per the data, the two most polluting industries are based in Chandrapur — Murli Cement and Vasant Sahakari Sakhar Kharkhana. Also, power plants like Adani (Bhandara), Khaparkheda, Mauda, Koradi, RattanIndia (Amravati) have got 5-star ratings. ACC (Chandrapur), JSW Ispat Steel (Nagpur), Uttam Galva Metallics Limited and Uttam Value Steel Limited too fall in the 'least polluting' category.

Apart from this, many industries of Nagpur, Amravati and Chandrapur have been rated two and three stars. These include industries of different sectors like metal works, paper, textiles and power. Only industries having at least four recent stack samples (air quality samples taken from chimney of manufacturing units) are eligible to participate in the programme.

As reported by TOI earlier, the ratings are based on the median concentration of latest stack samples for particulate matter. Industries emitting PM10 and PM2.5 more than the prescribed limit for stack emissions are rated one, two or three stars while those emitting within the permissible limits fall under four or five star.

"When compared to other cities of the state, Vidarbha has the least number of highly polluting industries," said Ishan Choudhary, the communications and outreach coordinator at EPIC-India.

The data for MMR, which was released last week, revealed that 29 out of 50 industries in Navi Mumbai, Tarapur, Kalyan and Thane were found to be highly polluting and were rated one and two star. “The PM10 and PM2.5 emissions of all these industries were much higher than the permissible limits,” said Choudhary.

Launched in June last year, the programme monitors industrial air pollution in 10 clusters of the state — Pune, Mumbai, Navi Mumbai, Thane, Nagpur, Chandrapur, Nashik, Aurangabad, Kolhapur and pockets of Gadchiroli.

Last year, fewer than 10 industries participated in the exercise. The list now has 48 more. However, industries that took part last year have not been rated this time.

MPCB member secretary P Anbalagan said that the board plans to include more industries in the coming days. “This is a good step towards ensuring transparency in environmental governance. In the first phase, we plan to include over 200 units of the state which will be assessed on air pollution. In the second phase, we plan to incorporate industries which release effluents so that both the pollution parameters can be monitored,” he added.

A meeting was held between MPCB officials, representatives of the industries and some other agencies. The industries have been told about their ratings and performances.

“MPCB’s programme is path-breaking by providing the public with critical information and rigorously testing its impact on pollution emissions,” said Michael Greenstone, one of the principal investigators on the project and director of EPIC. “It is apparent that MPCB is an international leader in identifying low-cost methods to achieve a cleaner environment,” he added.