Govt. tells utilities to ship in coal as demand surges

'Thermal units running out of stock'

REUTERS
CHENNAI

India has urged utilities to import coal despite having the world's fourth-largest reserves,with several power plants on the verge of running out of fuel due to a surge in power demand.

Coal-fired power accounts for more than 70% of India's electricity generation. Electricity generation makes up three-fourths of India's coal consumption.

"Thermal power plants, which may import coal for blending, may explore (ways) to enhance imports of coal to tide over the current crisis," the Power Ministry said in an August 30 notice seen by *Reuters*.

Data from the Central

Electricity Authority showed over half of the 135 coal-fired plants had less than a week's supply of coal left, of which 50 had fewer than three days of coal left. Six had run out of coal.

Overall electricity generation rose 16.1% in August, while coal-fired output rose 23.7% from a year earlier, a *Reuters* analysis of daily load despatch data by grid regulator POSOCO showed.