

ADDING COAL TO THE FIRE

Relevant for: Environment | Topic: Environmental Conservation, Sustainable Development, and EIA

Protesters wearing giant puppet heads resembling Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison and Australian Opposition Leader Bill Shorten are seen during a Stop Adani protest outside Parliament House in Canberra on February 12, 2019. Photo: AAP Image via Reuters

If India loses the fight against climate change, new investments in coal will be a decisive factor. India has reaffirmed its commitment to bold plans for switching to renewable energy. Yet, one of the world's largest new coal investments is Adani's \$16.5 billion dollar Carmichael coal mine project in Queensland. That this project is going ahead despite coal's declining competitiveness raises valid concerns that the new coal investments are viable only because they are supported by the Australian government's subsidies or incentives.

Coal mining provides incomes for Australia's local economy, but the health and environmental harm from mining and combustion represents a big net loss for the world. CO₂ emissions, the chief cause of climate change, totalled 36 billion metric tonnes globally in 2019, of which nearly 40% came from coal. The Carmichael mine is set to become Australia's largest coal mine, producing up to 60 million tonnes of coal annually and 2.3 billion tonnes over its 60-year lifespan. Of the nearly 8 billion tonnes of coal produced globally in 2019, a sixth is exported, with the largest share, one third, coming from Australia. In 2020, 16% of Australia's coal exports were shipped to India.

As India is the primary buyer of the Carmichael coal, the project will significantly add to its emissions. Australia's coal mining and coal exports generate incomes and jobs, but when the destruction from pollution, soil erosion, and biodiversity loss is included, the net contribution for India is negative. In south-western China, the environmental and social damage from burning coal exceeds the price of coal by four times. The health damages from coal-fired power stations in the U.S. are estimated at 1-6 times the value of the power output. In India, coal contributes to 1,00,000 premature deaths annually: the poor are hit hardest. With declining coal prices, the mine may be unable to generate sufficient revenue to get a return on investment. That the project might not be viable even financially — and this without considering the environmental, social and health impacts — is damning. It supports the worry that government subsidies underlie Adani's decision to proceed with the project. It bears mentioning that 17 international banks declined to fund the Carmichael mine based on its weak financials and environmental danger; State Bank of India's plan to provide financing is under scrutiny. A report by the Australia Institute points out that the spillover harm from extracting and burning coal is not included in the true cost of coal projects. One estimate puts the damage to health alone in Australia at \$2.6 billion annually. The mining of coal emits massive amounts of particle pollution, contributing to heart disease, lung disease and lung cancer. With exports of coal, India will be hurt too from burning coal, and the global harm is a multiple of Australia's.

Then there is the environmental and climate impact. Annual emissions of 79 million tonnes of carbon equivalent from the Carmichael mine is higher than Malaysia's 75 million tonnes and Austria's 76 million tonnes. The mine will also lead to the Galilee Basin being opened up to nine additional coal mines, which would cumulatively emit an estimated 705 million tonnes of CO₂ every year, more than 1.3 times Australia's current emissions. After facing heat waves, bushfires, and intense rainfall that are linked to climate change, Australia should be deeply concerned — and so should India. The Government of India is drawing up plans for carbon neutrality, following several others that have announced 2050 as their target date for this. Achieving a zero-carbon target will require vast investments in the production, storage, and

distribution of renewable energy. But the approval for Adani to mine and export coal to India makes reaching those targets much harder. It is time for India and Australia to leave coal underground.

Vinod Thomas is a former senior vice president of the World Bank and Chitranjali Tiwari is alumnus of Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy

Please enter a valid email address.

To reassure Indian Muslims, the PM needs to state that the govt. will not conduct an exercise like NRC

END

Downloaded from **crackIAS.com**

© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com

CrackIAS.com