

Five Asian countries account for 80% of new coal power investment

China, India, Indonesia, Japan and Vietnam plan to build more than 600 coal power units



China plans to increase its existing 1,100-gigawatt fleet of coal-fired power plants by another 187 gigawatts Photograph: Getty Images

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Five Asian countries are jeopardising global climate ambitions by investing in 80% of the world's planned new coal plants, according to a report.

Carbon Tracker, a financial thinktank, has found that China, India, Indonesia, Japan and Vietnam plan to build more than 600 coal power units, even though **renewable energy is cheaper than most new coal plants**.

The investments in one of the most environmentally damaging sources of energy could generate a total of 300 gigawatts of energy – enough to power the UK more than three times over – despite calls from climate experts at the UN for all new coal plants to be cancelled.

Catharina Hillenbrand von der Neyen, the author of the report, said: “These last bastions of coal power are swimming against the tide, when renewables offer a cheaper solution that supports global climate targets. Investors should steer clear of new coal projects, many of which are likely to generate negative returns from the outset.”

While Asia continues to plough money into coal plants, countries across the developed world are accelerating plans to phase them out. The UK government has announced plans to bring forward the deadline for coal plants to be decommissioned by **one year earlier than planned**, to 2024.

The new deadline for coal power, which made up 1.5% of electricity in the last quarter of 2020, received a muted response from green groups because it will force the shutdown of only one coal plant, at Ratcliffe-on-Soar in Nottinghamshire, after the West Burton A power plant shuts in September 2022.

Alok Sharma, the president-designate of the **Cop26 UN climate talks** in Glasgow later this year, said the government’s “decisive step” would send a “clear signal to friends around the world that clean power is the way forward”.

“The impact of this step will be far greater if we can bring the world with us, and so our desire to support a clean and just energy transition is central to my discussions on the road to Cop26,” he said.

China is the world’s leading coal investor, with plans to increase its existing 1,100-gigawatt fleet of coal-fired power plants by another 187 gigawatts, according to the report. Carbon Tracker claims that solar and windfarms could already generate cheaper electricity than more than 85% of the country’s existing coal plants, and that by 2024 renewable energy will be able to outcompete all coal-fired power.

In India, the world’s second largest coal power generator, and **Indonesia**, renewable energy will also be able to outcompete coal by 2024, while in Japan and Vietnam coal will be uneconomic compared with renewables by 2022.