

Climate change one of 'key challenges' of our time: Barack Obama

04/08/2015 14:34 by admin

Washington: US President Barack Obama on Monday announced a tougher climate change plan for power plants amidst an overwhelming opposition from several states nationwide.

By unveiling the final and tougher version of proposed regulations which the US Environmental protection Agency (EPA) announced in 2012 and 2014, the White House was hoping the Clean Power Plan could trigger sweeping policy changes which could shut down a large number of coal power plants and cut US emission of carbon dioxide by 32 percent by 2030, compared to 2005 levels.

"Climate change is no longer just about the future that we're predicting for our children or grandchildren," Xinhua quoted Obama as saying in the announcement in the White House. "It's about the reality that we' re living with every day."

According to the new plan, all US states are asked by the EPA to design their own plans to reach carbon reduction goals assigned to them by 2030. If the states fail to submit their plans by September of 2016, the EPA will impose its own plan upon them unless the state applies for extension period to finish its plan.

The final rule also delays the first round of implementing emission reduction from 2020 to 2022, a move that showed the administration's compromise to complaints from states which said that the original deadline was too soon.

In another major feature of the new plan, the White House would encourage a drastic shift from the use of coal towards renewable energy in generating electricity, setting the target for renewables' share of electric generation at 28 percent of all capacity.

If implemented, coal's share of electricity generation in the country would fall to 27 percent by 2030, according to briefing by EPA chief Gina McCarthy on Sunday. In the previous version of the plan, the target for coal's share of electric generation accounted for 30 percent.

Though being viewed by many as the strongest rule to fight climate change in a country where many politicians still dismiss the notion that human activities play a vital role in global warming, Obama could not safeguard the implementation of the latest move in his ambition to tackle global warming due to the fact that his presidency would end in 16 months.

Therefore, it will be up to Obama's successor to implement his plan, and the prospect was dim as almost all Republican presidential candidates were vocal in their opposition.

Meanwhile, about 20 to 30 US states were poised to join the energy industry in suing over the new plan and a number of US lawmakers from states which up till now had relied heavily on coal-fired power plant had vowed to sabotage the new plan through Congressional maneuvers.

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