

# India's top court cancels 214 coal field permits

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Miners haul baskets of coal as they load a truck near Rymbai village in the northeastern state of Meghalaya on January 31, 2013

India's top court on Wednesday cancelled 214 of the 218 government permits for coal mines allocated between 1993 and 2009 after the licensing process was deemed illegal.

Energy-hungry India's coal market has been in turmoil since the Supreme Court declared last month that the [government](#)-run procedure for awarding the coal blocks to private firms had been illegal.

On Wednesday the [court](#) cancelled 168 of the allocations with immediate effect and gave the remaining 46 six months' grace to continue operating.

"The court has cancelled all the allocations except four," Attorney General Mukul Rohtagi told reporters outside court.

The ruling that the blocks were allocated illegally stems from 2012 allegations by the national auditor that the government underpriced [coal mines](#) and gave away as much as \$33 billion in windfall gains to companies.

Many of the mines were allotted during the previous left-leaning government's stint in power in what became known as the "coalgate scandal".

The government has promised to initiate speedy "transparent" fresh auctions to deal with a looming power crisis in the country.

In an affidavit to the court before Wednesday's ruling, it said it wanted the process of "reallocation of the blocks to start as soon as possible".

India is suffering from critically low coal supplies which it needs to fuel power plants. Blackouts are common in the country of 1.2 billion people.

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