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# India's Updated NDC 2035 — 60% Non-Fossil Power and New Carbon Sink Target

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# India's Updated NDC 2035 — 60% Non-Fossil Power and New Carbon Sink Target

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## ✍ WHY IN NEWS

The Union Cabinet approved India's updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) under the Paris Agreement on March 31, 2026, ahead of the 2035 climate commitment cycle, setting a more ambitious target of 60% installed electric capacity from non-fossil sources and a deeper carbon sink commitment.

## INDIA'S CLIMATE POLICY ARCHITECTURE

### From Paris to 2035: The NDC Evolution

India submitted its first NDC in 2015 under the Paris Agreement, pledging to reduce emissions intensity of GDP by 33–35% from 2005 levels by 2030, achieve 40% non-fossil installed power capacity, and create an additional carbon sink of 2.5–3 billion tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent through forest and tree cover.

The 2022 updated NDC raised these targets: 45% emissions intensity reduction and 50% non-fossil installed capacity by 2030. The 2026 update — approved on the eve of India’s financial year-end — charts the 2031–2035 trajectory.

### Key 2035 NDC Targets

| INDICATOR                               | 2022 NDC (BY 2030)               | 2026 UPDATED NDC (BY 2035)             |
|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Non-fossil installed capacity           | 50%                              | <b>60%</b>                             |
| Emissions intensity reduction (vs 2005) | 45%                              | <b>47%</b>                             |
| Carbon sink target                      | 2.5–3 Bn tonnes CO <sub>2e</sub> | <b>3.5–4 Bn tonnes CO<sub>2e</sub></b> |

### Why 2035 Matters

Under the Paris Agreement’s “ratchet mechanism” (Article 4), countries must submit progressively more ambitious NDCs every five years. The 2035 NDC cycle, due by February 2025 (most nations delayed), will determine whether the global 1.5°C pathway remains feasible. India’s 60% non-fossil target — submitted as the new benchmark — signals that coal’s share in installed capacity will fall below 40% by 2035.

## INDIA’S RENEWABLE ENERGY REALITY (FY 2024-25)

### Energy Statistics India 2026 — NSO Data

The National Statistics Office’s 33rd edition of Energy Statistics India 2026 (released simultaneously) provides the baseline:

- **Total renewable energy potential:** 47,04,043 MW (as of March 2025)
- **Solar’s share of RE potential:** ~71%
- **RE electricity generated (FY 2024-25):** 4,16,823 GWh
- **Installed RE capacity CAGR (2016–2025):** 10.93%
- **Transmission & Distribution losses:** reduced from 22% (FY 2015-16) to 17% (FY 2024-25)
- **CO<sub>2</sub> emissions growth:** slowed to 0.7% in 2025 — slowest in two decades (excluding pandemic)

### Top 6 States by RE Potential

Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Madhya Pradesh together hold ~70% of India’s total renewable energy potential.

### The 60% Target: Pathway and Challenges

To reach 60% non-fossil installed capacity by 2035, India needs to install approximately 500–600 GW of additional renewable capacity beyond its current ~200 GW. Key enablers and bottlenecks:

| FACTOR                  | STATUS                                      |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Solar manufacturing     | PLI scheme; 30 GW domestic module target    |
| Battery storage (BESS)  | Viability Gap Funding scheme announced 2024 |
| Grid upgradation        | Green Energy Corridor Phase II ongoing      |
| Land acquisition        | Major barrier for utility-scale solar/wind  |
| T&D losses              | Still among highest globally at 17%         |
| Credit to energy sector | ₹10,325 crore (2025) vs ₹1,688 crore (2021) |

## CARBON SINK AND LAND USE

### Expanding the Forest Carbon Sink

India's updated carbon sink target of 3.5–4 billion tonnes CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent by 2035 requires sustained forest cover expansion and tree-outside-forest (TOF) programmes.

#### Key Mechanisms

- **National Afforestation Programme** — Ministry of Environment
- **Compensatory Afforestation Fund (CAMPA)** — state-level forest restoration
- **Green India Mission** — under National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC)
- **Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana (PMKSY)** — watershed development with incidental carbon benefits

India's current forest and tree cover: 25.17% of geographic area (Forest Survey of India 2023) — short of the 33% constitutional goal (Article 48A + DPSP).

## INDIA'S CLIMATE DIPLOMACY POSTURE

### Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR)

India consistently frames its NDC as ambitious given its development imperatives:

- Per capita CO<sub>2</sub> emissions: ~2.4 tonnes (India) vs 14.9 tonnes (USA), 7.7 tonnes (China)
- Energy poverty: ~20 crore Indians still lack reliable electricity access
- Historical cumulative emissions: India's share < 4% of global stock since industrialisation

### **Loss and Damage Fund — India's Position**

India backed the creation of the **Loss and Damage Fund** at COP27 (Sharm el-Sheikh, 2022). At COP28 (Dubai, 2023), India pushed for developed countries to bear the primary burden of fund capitalisation, arguing that India itself faces acute climate vulnerability — coastal erosion, Himalayan glacial retreat, cyclone intensification.

### **Coal Phase-Down vs Phase-Out**

India was central to the COP26 (Glasgow, 2021) language shift from “phase-out” to “phase-down” of unabated coal. The 2026 NDC does not set a coal retirement date — consistent with India’s position that transition must be “just and equitable,” protecting coal-dependent communities (Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Odisha).

#### **UPSC RELEVANCE**

Paris Agreement’s NDC ratchet mechanism; India’s 2035 NDC targets (60% non-fossil, 47% emissions intensity, 3.5–4 Bn tonne sink); Energy Statistics India 2026 key figures; CBDR principle.

#### **MAINS GS-3:**

“Evaluate India’s updated NDC commitments in light of its development imperatives and international climate obligations.” Discuss the gap between India’s renewable energy potential and actualisation challenges.

#### **MAINS GS-2 (IR):**

India’s climate diplomacy at COP processes — CBDR, Loss and Damage Fund, coal phase-down stance.

## ★ FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA

### INDIA'S 2026 NDC (BY 2035):

- Non-fossil installed capacity: 60%
- Emissions intensity reduction vs 2005: 47%
- Carbon sink target: 3.5–4 billion tonnes CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent

### PREVIOUS NDC (2022 UPDATE, BY 2030):

- Non-fossil installed capacity: 50%
- Emissions intensity reduction: 45%
- Carbon sink: 2.5–3 billion tonnes CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent

### ENERGY STATISTICS INDIA 2026 (NSO, 33RD EDITION):

- Total RE potential: 47,04,043 MW
- Solar share: ~71% of RE potential
- Installed RE CAGR (2016–2025): 10.93%
- RE generation FY 2024-25: 4,16,823 GWh
- T&D losses: 17% (down from 22% in 2015-16)
- CO<sub>2</sub> growth: 0.7% (2025) — slowest in 20 years ex-pandemic

### PARIS AGREEMENT — CLIMATE TIMELINES:

- Paris Agreement: adopted December 12, 2015; entered force November 4, 2016
- NDC ratchet cycle: every 5 years (Article 4)
- COP26 (Glasgow 2021): phase-down of coal agreed
- COP28 (Dubai 2023): Loss and Damage Fund operationalised

### INDIA'S FOREST COVER:

- Total forest + tree cover: 25.17% (FSI 2023)
- Constitutional goal: 33% (Article 48A)
- CAMPA: Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority

### OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:

- India's per capita CO<sub>2</sub>: ~2.4 tonnes vs USA 14.9 tonnes, China 7.7 tonnes
- India's share of historical global emissions: < 4%

Top RE states (70% of national potential): Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh

Credit to energy sector: ₹10,325 crore (2025) vs ₹1,688 crore (2021)

Sources: [PIB](#), [Ministry of New and Renewable Energy](#), [NSO Energy Statistics 2026](#)

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