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**EDITORIAL ANALYSIS**

# A Reminder on Climate Action Amid Conflict — India's Updated NDC and the Case for Consistent Commitment



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# A Reminder on Climate Action Amid Conflict — India's Updated NDC and the Case for Consistent Commitment



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GS3

GS2

 Hindustan Times

4 tags



## INTERVIEW ANGLE

"India submitted an updated NDC with more ambitious climate targets even as the West Asia conflict caused oil price spikes and energy insecurity. Is India's approach to climate commitments genuinely ambitious, or is it making promises that are easy when oil prices are low?"

## WHY IN NEWS

India's updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) for 2031-35 — submitted to the UNFCCC in March 2026 — targets a 47% reduction in emissions intensity (per unit of GDP) from 2005 levels and 60% of installed electric capacity from non-fossil fuel sources by 2035. Hindustan Times's editorial praises India's continued climate commitment in a geopolitical environment where the Iran conflict and energy price shocks are being used by other nations as grounds to pause or reverse climate pledges.

## WHAT INDIA'S UPDATED NDC CONTAINS

### The Three Target Framework

India's NDC system under the Paris Agreement (Article 4) covers three interconnected targets:

TARGET TYPE	2022 NDC (UPDATED)	2026 NDC (NEW)
Emissions Intensity	-45% from 2005 levels by 2030	-47% from 2005 levels by 2035
Non-Fossil Power Capacity	50% by 2030	60% by 2035
Carbon Sink (Forests)	2.5-3 billion tonnes CO <sub>2</sub> equivalent by 2030	3 billion tonnes CO <sub>2</sub> equivalent by 2035

**Key distinction:** India's NDC targets are **intensity-based** (emissions per unit of GDP), not absolute emissions reduction targets. This means:

- India's absolute emissions can still grow (as GDP grows)
- But the carbon efficiency of each unit of GDP must improve
- This reflects India's CBDR (Common But Differentiated Responsibilities) position — a developing country's right to grow economically while improving efficiency

## Why the 60% Non-Fossil Capacity Target Matters

India's current installed power capacity (April 2026):

- Total: ~740 GW (installed capacity)
- Renewable energy (solar + wind + hydro + nuclear + others): ~43%
- Coal and gas: ~57%

Achieving 60% non-fossil by 2035 requires approximately 500-600 GW of new renewable capacity in 9 years — an annual addition rate of ~55-65 GW/year. India currently adds approximately 25-30 GW/year of renewable capacity. The target requires roughly doubling the current installation rate.

**This is ambitious, not trivially achievable.** The HT editorial notes this is precisely why it deserves recognition — it is a genuine stretch goal, not a business-as-usual projection.

## THE HT EDITORIAL'S CENTRAL ARGUMENT — CONSISTENCY UNDER PRESSURE

### The Geopolitical Context — Why Other Nations Are Wavering

The Iran conflict and resulting oil price volatility (Brent crude above \$110/barrel in Q1 2026) have triggered:

- **EU:** Several member states pushing to delay 2030 emission reduction targets citing energy security
- **USA:** Congressional pressure to resume offshore drilling permits
- **Japan:** Accelerating LNG import contracts as Hormuz risk rises
- **China:** Publicly acknowledging it will prioritise “energy security” over near-term emission targets

**The pattern:** Energy price shocks have historically been used to justify climate policy reversal. The 2021-22 post-COVID energy price spike saw similar pressure across developed economies to delay coal phase-out.

### India's Counter-Narrative

The editorial argues India's NDC submission sends a different signal:

- ① **Climate commitment is not contingent on oil price:** India — more dependent on oil imports (85%) than any G20 economy — is choosing to accelerate the transition rather than use the price shock as an excuse to delay.
- ② **Energy security and climate security are aligned:** More domestic renewable energy = less oil import dependence = greater energy security. India's NDC is simultaneously a climate commitment and an energy security strategy.
- ③ **Developing world leadership:** India is signalling to the Global South that climate ambition and development aspiration are compatible — resisting the false choice between growth and emission reduction.

## THE CREDIBILITY QUESTION — IS INDIA WALKING THE TALK?

The HT editorial is broadly supportive but raises credibility concerns:

### What India Is Doing Well

- **Solar capacity:** India has added over 100 GW of solar capacity in 5 years (2020-2025) — the fastest solar expansion by any non-OECD country
- **RE auction pipeline:** SECI (Solar Energy Corporation of India) has auctioned over 80 GW of renewable capacity pending commissioning
- **Green Hydrogen Mission:** Rs 19,744 crore for green hydrogen development
- **PM Kusum (solar pumps) and National Solar Rooftop Programme:** Decentralised solar deployment

### Where India Falls Short

- **Coal dependence:** India remains the world's 2nd largest coal consumer; new coal capacity additions continue
- **EV adoption:** EV share in new passenger vehicle sales is approximately 3% — far below the targets in NITI Aayog's e-AMRIT platform
- **Forest cover:** The NDC's carbon sink target requires expanding forest cover — but forest diversion for development projects continues
- **State-level RE targets:** Many states have not aligned their power procurement policies with national RE targets

## The Accountability Gap

The NDC contains no binding domestic enforcement mechanism. There is no Indian legislation equivalent to the UK's Climate Change Act (2008) — which creates legally binding carbon budgets that the government must meet. India's NDC targets are national voluntary commitments to the UNFCCC, not enforceable domestic law.

### PARIS AGREEMENT FRAMEWORK — QUICK REFERENCE

**Article 4:** NDC obligations — countries must submit, maintain, and progressively raise the ambition of NDCs every 5 years.

**Global Stocktake (Article 14):** Every 5 years, UNFCCC assesses collective progress. The first Global Stocktake (2023) found the world off-track for 1.5°C — reinforcing the need for more ambitious NDCs.

**CBDR-RC (Common But Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities):** Principle from Rio 1992 and UNFCCC that developed countries bear greater historical responsibility and must lead in emission reductions; developing countries can prioritise development while improving efficiency.

**UNFCCC Loss and Damage Fund:** Established at COP27 (Sharm el-Sheikh, 2022); operationalised at COP28 (Dubai, 2023); provides funding to climate-vulnerable nations for irreversible impacts.

#### UPSC RELEVANCE

Paris Agreement (2015); NDC; Article 4 (NDC mechanism); CBDR-RC; India's 2026 NDC targets (47% intensity, 60% non-fossil capacity by 2035); SECI; Global Stocktake (Article 14); COP28; Loss and Damage Fund.

#### MAINS GS-3:

“India's Nationally Determined Contributions — evaluate the ambition, credibility, and domestic policy alignment of India's updated NDC.”

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

“India as a climate leader in the developing world — analyse India's negotiating positions at the UNFCCC and their evolution from Copenhagen (2009) to Paris (2015) to the current cycle.”

#### INTERVIEW:

“India is simultaneously submitting an ambitious NDC and approving new coal projects. Is this contradictory, or is there a coherent logic?”

## ★ FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA

### INDIA'S NDC HISTORY:

First NDC (2015): 33-35% emission intensity reduction by 2030 from 2005; 40% non-fossil capacity by 2030; 2.5-3 bt CO<sub>2</sub> sink

Updated NDC (2022): -45% intensity by 2030; 50% non-fossil capacity by 2030

Updated NDC (2026): -47% intensity by 2035; 60% non-fossil capacity by 2035; 3 bt CO<sub>2</sub> sink

### INDIA'S RENEWABLE ENERGY MILESTONES:

Installed RE capacity (April 2026): ~43% of ~740 GW total installed capacity

Solar capacity: ~200 GW+ (April 2026)

Wind capacity: ~50 GW+

Target: 500 GW RE by 2030 (original target under Panchamrit)

### PARIS AGREEMENT — KEY ARTICLES:

Article 2: 1.5°C global temperature limit; adaptation; finance alignment

Article 4: NDC submission and progressive ambition ratchet (every 5 years)

Article 6: Carbon markets (cooperative approaches)

Article 9: Climate finance (\$100 billion/year from developed countries — target missed until 2022)

Article 14: Global Stocktake (every 5 years)

### INDIA'S PANCHAMRIT (COP26, GLASGOW, 2021):

500 GW non-fossil energy by 2030

50% energy from renewables by 2030

45% emissions intensity reduction by 2030

Net zero by 2070

1 billion tonnes CO<sub>2</sub> reduction by 2030

### OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:

CBDR-RC: Agreed in Rio Declaration (1992) + UNFCCC (1992) + Kyoto Protocol (1997) + Paris Agreement (2015)

UK Climate Change Act 2008: Legally binding carbon budgets; model for climate legislation globally

India's coal dependency: ~55% of electricity generation from coal (despite RE growth); coal remains baseload

SECI (Solar Energy Corporation of India): Under MNRE; conducts RE auctions; nodal agency for large-scale RE projects

India's NDC submission deadline: Every 5 years; first update due 2020 (delayed to 2022 due to COVID); next due 2025-26

Sources: [Hindustan Times](#), [UNFCCC NDC Registry](#), [MoEFCC](#), [MNRE](#), [PIB](#)

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