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UPSC 360°

The Hindu Unwrapped - Daily Current Affairs Mastery for UPSC CSE (Clear that it's based on The Hindu editorials / news analyses - very aspirant-friendly)

Significance

India's Updated NDC 2025 under the Paris Agreement strengthens its climate commitments by enhancing renewable energy targets and reducing emissions intensity. It boosts global climate leadership, attracts green investments, supports sustainable development, and balances economic growth with environmental responsibility while reinforcing India's role in achieving global climate goals.

India's Updated NDC 2025

Why in News?

- On **25 March 2026**, Union Minister **Ashwini Vaishnaw** briefed the Cabinet on India's updated **Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC)** to be submitted to the UNFCCC by the end of 2025. The new NDC raises India's climate ambition with the following targets to be achieved by **2035**:
 - 60% of installed electricity capacity** from non-fossil fuel sources.
 - 47% reduction in emissions intensity** of GDP from 2005 levels.
 - Increase carbon sink to **3.5 to 4 billion tonnes** of CO₂ equivalent through forest and tree cover.
- These targets build on the 2022 NDC (50% non-fossil power by 2030, 45% emissions intensity reduction by 2030, and 2.5-3 billion tonnes carbon sink).

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- The announcement comes ahead of the next cycle of global climate ambition and the ongoing first **Global Stocktake (GST)** follow-up process. It has been described as a “strong resolve” by the government while independent analysts highlight both progress and contradictions in India’s climate strategy.

Key Targets in India’s Updated NDC (2035)

- **Non-Fossil Fuel Electricity Capacity**
 - Target: **60%** of installed capacity (previous target: 50% by 2030).
 - Current status (early 2026): ~52% of installed electricity capacity is non-fossil.
- **Emissions Intensity of GDP**
 - Target: **47% reduction** from 2005 levels (previous: 45% by 2030).
- **Carbon Sink**
 - Target: **3.5 to 4 billion tonnes** of CO₂ equivalent through forest and tree cover (previous: 2.5-3 billion tonnes).
 - Forest and tree cover currently accounts for ~24.6% of India’s geographical area.
- **Additional Elements**
 - Continued emphasis on energy efficiency, technology transfer, and climate finance.
 - Strong reaffirmation of **CBDR-RC** (Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities) and equity.

Background: Evolution of India’s NDCs

- **Paris Agreement (2015)**
 - India submitted its first NDC in 2016.
- **2022 NDC Update**
 - 50% non-fossil power by 2030
 - 45% emissions intensity reduction by 2030

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- 2.5-3 billion tonnes carbon sink

- **Global Stocktake (GST) Context**

- First GST concluded at COP28 (2023) – called for tripling renewable capacity globally by 2030.
- India's updated NDC is a response to GST and prepares for the next ambition cycle.

- **Domestic Alignment**

- National Green Hydrogen Mission, PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana, PM-KUSUM, National Solar Mission.
- Net-zero target by 2070 remains unchanged.

Implications

- **Energy Transition**

- Accelerates shift from coal (currently ~50% of power mix) to renewables, hydro, and nuclear.
- Requires massive investment in grid modernisation, storage, and green hydrogen.

- **Economic & Developmental**

- Supports long-term energy security and reduces import dependence.
- Creates jobs in renewable manufacturing, installation, and services.

- **Climate Leadership**

- Demonstrates India's continued leadership from the Global South.
- Maintains balance between development needs and climate action.

- **Challenges & Contradictions**

- Plans for significant new coal-fired capacity (~100 GW over next seven years).

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- Petrochemical and steel sector expansion (fossil-fuel intensive).
- Carbon sink target depends heavily on forest cover, which faces pressures from development projects.

UPSC CSE & State PCS Relevance

Prelims

- Key terms: Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), Global Stocktake (GST), CBDR-RC, Emissions Intensity, Carbon Sink
- Data: 60% non-fossil target by 2035, 47% emissions intensity reduction, Carbon sink 3.5-4 billion tonnes
- Related: Paris Agreement, UNFCCC, National Green Hydrogen Mission

GS-3 (Environment)

- Climate change mitigation targets & NDCs
- India's renewable energy transition

GS-2 (IR)

- Global climate governance & equity in Paris Agreement
- India's leadership in Global South

GS-3 (Economy)

- Energy transition and sustainable development

Essay / Interview

- "From Paris to 2035: India's Evolving Climate Leadership and the Road to Net-Zero"
- "Balancing Development and Decarbonisation: India's Updated NDC and the Quest for Climate Justice"

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MCQs

1. With reference to India's updated NDC announced in March 2026, consider the following statements:
2. India aims for 60% non-fossil fuel power capacity by 2035.
3. It targets a 47% reduction in emissions intensity of GDP from 2005 levels.
4. The carbon sink target has been raised to 3.5-4 billion tonnes of CO₂ equivalent.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 1 and 2 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (d)

2. The first Global Stocktake (GST) under the Paris Agreement was concluded at:
 - (a) COP26 (Glasgow)
 - (b) COP27 (Sharm el-Sheikh)
 - (c) COP28 (Dubai)
 - (d) COP29 (Baku)

Answer: (c)

3. India's previous NDC (2022 update) targeted what percentage of non-fossil fuel power capacity by 2030?
 - (a) 40%
 - (b) 50%

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(c) 60%

(d) 70%

Answer: (b)

4. Which of the following is NOT part of India's updated 2035 climate targets?

(a) 60% non-fossil power capacity

(b) Net-zero emissions

(c) 47% emissions intensity reduction

(d) 3.5-4 billion tonnes carbon sink

Answer: (b)

Mains Questions

1. "India's updated NDC for 2035 demonstrates enhanced climate ambition while upholding equity and CBDR-RC." Discuss the significance of these targets in the context of the Global Stocktake and India's development priorities. (15 marks / 250 words)
2. Analyse the challenges India faces in achieving 60% non-fossil fuel power capacity by 2035 and suggest measures to overcome them. (10 marks / 150 words)
3. "Climate action must be viewed through the lens of sustainable development rather than emission reduction alone." Examine this statement with reference to India's updated NDC and its carbon sink enhancement target. (15 marks / 250 words)
4. **Essay (250 marks)** "From Paris to 2035: India's Evolving Climate Leadership and the Road to Net-Zero."

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