

RENEWABLE ENERGY ENVIRONMENT

Union Cabinet approves India's climate pledges

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However, India's updated NDC does not include all the promises made at COP26



India has ratified pledges made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Glasgow last November to accelerate India's reliance on renewable energy to power the economy and be effectively fossil fuel-free **by 2070**. However the approved pledges were fewer than those Mr. Modi committed to.

The Union Cabinet, chaired by Mr. Modi, on Wednesday approved an update to India's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), which is a formal communication to the United Nations, spelling out steps to be **taken by the country** towards keeping global temperatures from rising beyond 2°C by the end of the century.

Mr. Modi had laid out five commitments, or '*Panchamrit*', as the government references it, namely: That India would increase its non-fossil energy capacity to 500 GW (gigawatt) by 2030, India would meet 50% of its energy requirements from "**renewable energy**" **by 2030**, it would reduce the total projected carbon emissions by one billion tonnes from now till

2030, India will reduce the carbon intensity of its economy by more than 45% and by the year 2070, India will achieve the target of “Net Zero,” namely, that there would be no net carbon dioxide emitted from energy sources.

These were part of his address at the UN Summit.

Mentions only two

However, a press statement, following the Cabinet approval, only mentions two of these promises, namely that India **is committed to reduce emissions intensity** of its GDP by 45% by 2030, from 2005 level and achieving 50% cumulative electric power installed capacity from non-fossil fuel-based energy resources by 2030. The press note says these commitments were “... a step towards achieving India’s long term goal of reaching net-zero by 2070.”

India’s last NDC was on October 2, 2015 that specified eight targets, including reducing the emissions intensity of GDP by 33-35% (of 2005 levels) by 2030, having 40% of its installed electricity capacity sourced from renewable energy and create an additional carbon sink of 2-3 billion tonnes of CO₂ equivalent through forest and tree cover by 2030.

India’s NDC did not “bind it” to any sector-specific mitigation obligation or action and that India’s goal was to reduce overall emission intensity and improve energy efficiency “while protecting the vulnerable sectors of economy and society,” the Wednesday press note added.

The document specifying India’s NDC wasn’t made public and requests by *The Hindu* to Environment Ministry officials for clarity were not immediately acceded to.

Senior Ministers of the government have several times said India would achieve its target ahead of schedule. Power Minister R.K. Singh said at the Sydney Energy Forum in Sydney, Australia, on July 13 that India had installed 162 GW of renewable energy capacity, which is 41% of the 402 GW of electricity installed.

Energy transition

“We reached this target on November 2021 and what our Prime Minister did was ask us to raise our ambition and so in Glasgow (at the UN COP-21) our Prime Minister committed to installing 500 GW of renewable energy by 2030, which would then be 50% of the installed capacity. Despite having among the lowest per capita emissions in the world, we have invested in this energy transition because our traditions teach us to respect and care for our environment. We are not doing this for economic reasons,” Mr. Singh said.

India’s obligations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change obligate it to update its NDC before the upcoming Conference of Parties to be held this November at Sharm-al-Shaikh, Egypt.

Independent experts said that while the NDCs reflected India's commitment to sustainable development they were a climbdown from the ambition India had expressed at Glasgow.

"India's updated NDC does not include all the *Panchamrit* promises made at COP26 in Glasgow," Vibhuti Garg, Energy Economist and India Lead, Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis, said in a statement. "While the government revised NDC includes 45% emission intensity reduction ... and also rightly emphasises the different schemes through which these targets can be achieved, it falls short of some actionable targets."

Madhura Joshi, Senior Associate, India Energy Transition Lead, E3G, said: "India's updated NDC targets are a welcome move...these targets, while lower than the *panchamrits*, are actionable. A reiteration of the renewables focus would have provided a fresh impetus for the renewables sector. But hopefully, the updated NDC will lay the path for achieving and exceeding Prime Minister Modi's vision."

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