

India likely to update climate NDC ahead of COP26

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A joint statement issued last week by Quad countries stated that all member states intend to update or communicate ambitious nationally determined contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement before the climate meet, also known as the 26th Conference of Parties, or COP26



Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses at the UN General Assembly on September 25. India may update its NDC ahead of or at the COP26 to be held in Glasgow in November. (ANI)

New Delhi: India may update its voluntary emissions-control commitments ahead of or at the United Nations climate summit to be held in Glasgow in November.

“There are talks of announcing a slightly updated target taking into account our commitments on renewable energy,” said an official at the environment ministry. “This may happen at COP26.”

A joint statement issued last week by Quad countries — Australia, India, Japan, and the United States — stated that all member states intend to update or communicate ambitious nationally determined contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement before the climate meet, also known as the 26th Conference of Parties, or COP26.

It could mean India will announce an updated NDC ahead of or at COP 26. “The statement states what quad countries intend to do,” another environment ministry official said. “We cannot confirm or deny it because the decision on NDC is taken at the highest level because it involves many sectors.” Both officials declined to be named.

India will install 450 gigawatts (GW) of renewable energy by 2030, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had reiterated on September 25 at the 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly .

“India has established a better balance in both economy and ecology. You will definitely be proud to see India’s efforts on climate action as compared to big and developed countries,” Modi had said. “Today, India is moving very fast towards the target of 450 GW of renewable energy. We are also in the campaign to make India the world’s largest Green Hydrogen Hub.”

Quad countries last week said they will pursue efforts to limit global warming to 1.5 degree C above pre-industrial levels, the ambitious target agreed upon in the 2015 Paris climate pact.

To this end, Quad countries intend to update or communicate ambitious NDCs by COP26 and welcome those who have already done so. Quad countries will also coordinate their diplomacy to raise global ambition, including reaching out to key stakeholders in the Indo-Pacific region,” the Quad statement had said. “Our work is organized across three thematic areas: climate ambition,

clean-energy innovation and deployment, and climate adaptation, resilience and preparedness, with the intent to pursue enhanced actions during the 2020s, contributing to the aim of achieving global net-zero emissions preferably by 2050, and taking into account national circumstances.”

Quad countries are focusing on nationally appropriate decarbonisation efforts, which includes decarbonising shipping and port operations and deploying clean-hydrogen technology. It will work for successful outcomes at the COP26 and G20 (meeting of G20 group of nations on October 30 and 31) that uphold the level of climate ambition and innovation, the statement added.

India’s present NDC submitted in 2015 consists of three main elements — an economy-wide emissions intensity target of 33% to 35% below 2005 levels, electric power capacity target of 40% installed capacity from non-fossil-based energy resources by 2030 (conditional to international support), and creating a carbon sink expansion target of creating an additional (cumulative) carbon sink of 2.5–3 billion tonnes through additional forest and tree cover by 2030.

India’s non-fossil fuel installed power capacity at 153.88 GW is already 39.64% of the total installed capacity, which indicates the country is likely to exceed one of the elements of its NDCs, the environment ministry had said in a statement earlier in September. India has already achieved a drop of 24% in the emissions intensity of its GDP compared to 2005 levels.

Experts, however, clarified that the Quad statement doesn’t imply that all four countries will announce net zero emissions by 2050. Net zero is a global goal that has to be achieved collaboratively, factoring in national and economic circumstances of each country, they said.

For India, a net zero emissions target could be deeply flawed, warned Chandrashekhar Dasgupta, former ambassador to the European Union and China, and a climate negotiator.

“The Quad joint communique refers to the global goal of net-zero emissions by 2050 and pledges that the four partners will ‘contribute’ to this aim. In the case of India, this should not be seen as commitment to a national 2050 net-zero goal,” Dasgupta said. “Each country should contribute to the global goal in accordance with the principles of ‘common but differentiated responsibilities’ and its national circumstances, as required by the UN climate change convention and the Paris Agreement.”

“India’s current and historical per capita emissions are very low and these will increase for the next few decades as we pursue our sustainable development goals. A national 2050 ‘net-zero’ commitment would undermine these goals, especially poverty eradication and human resource development,” Dasgupta said. “Given our national circumstances, a national net-zero target for 2050 would be a deeply flawed response to the climate change challenge, in addition to negating the aim of poverty eradication.”

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