

INDIA AT COP: NAVIGATING THE POLITICS OF CLIMATE NEGOTIATIONS— FROM CBDR TO NET ZERO

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Abstract

India has long occupied a pivotal space in global Climate negotiations, balancing its developmental imperatives with international expectations of environmental responsibility. This research paper critically examines India's evolving stance at the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), tracing its trajectory from the firm advocacy of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR) to the landmark commitment to achieve Net Zero emissions by 2070. Drawing on key Climate summits, policy documents, and diplomatic interventions, the paper explores how domestic priorities, international pressures, geopolitical alliances, and economic strategies have shaped India's negotiating position over the past two decades. It highlights India's shift from a defensive posture emphasizing historical emissions and equity, to a more assertive and constructive role exemplified by initiatives like the International Solar Alliance (ISA) and updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). The paper argues that while India's climate diplomacy has matured, it continues to straddle the line between Climate Justice advocacy and strategic alignment with global mitigation goals. This nuanced transformation not only reflects India's changing role in the international order but also raises critical questions about the nature of equitable climate action in the Global South.

Keywords: *Climate Negotiation, COP, UNFCCC, CBDR, Net Zero Emission, NDCs (Nationally Determined Contribution), International Solar Alliance,*

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Introduction

CBDR means ***Common but Differentiated Responsibilities***. It is an international principle that promotes global cooperation on environmental issues while recognizing that countries should not share equal responsibility. Instead, responsibilities should differ based on factors such as economic capacity, level of industrial development, and past environmental damage.

This idea is based on historical inequalities created by Colonialism, Imperialism, and Industrialization. Developed countries became wealthy through heavy industrial activity and have contributed more to pollution, especially greenhouse gas emissions. On the other hand, developing and least developed countries have contributed less but suffer more from climate impacts due to limited resources and geographical risks. Therefore, expecting all countries to take the same level of action would be unfair and unjust.¹

This chapter explains how India's position in UN climate negotiations (COPs) has changed over time. It shows India's shift from strongly supporting the principle of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (**CBDR**) under the UNFCCC and Kyoto Protocol to announcing its own net-zero target at COP26. Net-zero means balancing greenhouse gas emissions with their removal, not completely stopping emissions. Gases like carbon dioxide and methane cause global warming, so the aim is to reduce emissions and increase absorption through forests, technology, and improved land use.²

The concept of sustainability has always been part of the culture and traditions of India. However, with the modernization and advancement that has taken place over the past few decades, sustainability started to take a backseat to other goals. Recently, though, with the collective efforts of world leaders, sustainability has started to advance in many countries, including India. And one of major initiatives is goal of Net Zero emission in India and ³. Net Zero by 2070 means that by that year, India aims to remove as much carbon from the atmosphere as it emits. This involves a complete overhaul of sectors such as energy, transportation, industry, and agriculture.⁴

This work is based on how India uses ideas of equity and development to shape its climate negotiation strategies, form alliances, and create domestic climate policies. It also looks at the gap between global expectations from India and its internal challenges, such as energy needs, poverty reduction, industrial growth, and dependence on coal. The unit shows how India balances arguments about historical responsibility with practical actions for climate mitigation and adaptation. It ends with policy suggestions to help India protect its development goals, remain credible, and use global cooperation effectively in the net-zero era.

Climate change is a global issue that affects countries, ecosystems, and societies across borders. It refers to changes in the Earth's normal climate. While natural climate changes cannot be controlled, current concern focuses on human-caused climate change. This issue gained global attention in the late 1980s, and India has played an active role in addressing it since then.⁵

The climate crisis is one of the greatest challenges of this century, disproportionately affecting developing nations by worsening inequality and poverty. India has a long tradition of environmental stewardship and has actively contributed to global climate change solutions from the very beginning.⁶ The Conference of the Parties (COP) under the UNFCCC is the main forum for global climate negotiations. As a major emitter with significant development needs, India faces the challenge of balancing economic growth with climate action, and its 2070 net-zero commitment highlights the important role developing countries play in achieving global climate goals.⁷ However, This unit aims to explain how India has navigated climate negotiations, moving from a strong defender of CBDR to an active participant in global efforts toward net-zero, and what this transformation means for its diplomacy and development priorities.

The year 2070 provides India with:

- Time to develop clean energy infrastructure
- Economic space for industrial growth
- Technological innovation for Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS)

This timeline acknowledges historical emissions by developed nations and India's need for equitable climate justice.⁸

Balancing poverty eradication with rising climate risks, India has become a leading voice for the Global South, advocating equity, historical responsibility, and climate justice. Its emphasis on climate finance, technology transfer, and initiatives like the International Solar Alliance and the Lead IT Summit reflects a strong commitment to cooperative global climate solutions.⁹

India has become one of the most important countries in global climate politics. Global efforts to address climate change through intergovernmental negotiations have been underway for nearly three decades. India has been an active player in this process.¹⁰ And India's engagement with climate change is shaped by its severe climate vulnerabilities and colonial history. These experiences influence its ideas, identity, and interests, guiding its role in shaping shared global climate solutions.¹¹

Conceptual Framework

The principle of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (**CBDR**), adopted at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, holds that while all nations must act on climate change, their obligations vary according to historical emissions and capacities. This principle shaped early agreements like the Kyoto Protocol and remains central to India's climate diplomacy, closely linked to climate justice and development concerns. As a climate-vulnerable country facing extreme weather impacts, India's Union Budget 2025–26 reflects efforts to balance social and environmental priorities while advancing its 2070 net-zero goal. International relations theories such as realism and constructivism help explain India's climate positions and actions.¹²

This paper draws on key reference points such as India's *Panchamrit* commitments at COP26, updated NDCs, the LT-LEDS, the COP27 Loss and Damage agreement, and the COP28 decision on fossil fuels. These illustrate India's continued emphasis on equity alongside active global cooperation. From Rio and Kyoto to Paris, the UNFCCC and COPs remain central to climate negotiations, where India has evolved from a developing country to an increasingly influential global actor.¹³ In the early years, UNFCCC negotiations were shaped

by a strict separation between developed (**Annex I**) and developing (**non-Annex I**) nations under CBDR-RC. India consistently defended this divide, arguing that fair climate action must account for historical emissions and per-capita equity, especially when determining mitigation responsibilities and access to finance and technology.

This work addresses three interrelated questions-

1. How has India’s negotiating strategy evolved from the CBDR era to the net-zero era?
2. What domestic constraints and policy choices shape India’s international posture?
3. How can India reconcile claims of equity with the operational requirements of achieving net-zero in a way that secures finance, technology, and political space for development?

Methodology and Analytical Framework

This study adopts a qualitative, policy-oriented approach based on document analysis and theory-driven interpretation. Primary sources include India’s updated NDC, LT-LEDS **Long- Term Low Emission Development Strategies**, official COP decisions, UNFCCC reports, and key statements such as the COP26 *Panchamrit*. Secondary sources consist of academic literature on climate justice, energy transitions, and policy analyses, supported by UNFCCC and international think-tank summaries. All major primary documents were accessed through official government and UNFCCC portals.

Analytically, the chapter integrates three perspectives:

1. A climate justice lens focusing on equity, CBDR-RC, historical responsibility, and the need for finance and technology transfer;
2. A domestic political economy lens examining how energy demand, coal dependence, industrial policy, and employment shape India’s negotiating stance;
3. And a bargaining and coalition theory lens explaining India’s alliance-building, issue linkages, and leadership in initiatives like the ISA and CDRI. Together, these frameworks show how India’s climate positions reflect the interaction of internal constraints and external strategic opportunities.

Factors Influencing India's Evolving Stance

India's climate stance is shaped by geopolitical expectations, economic opportunities in clean energy, and advances in renewable technologies. As a rising power, India seeks to balance leadership ambitions and low-carbon growth with its development priorities and commitment to equitable climate responsibility.

The Historical Context: (The CBDR and Early COP Politics)

Over recent decades, international environmental law developed the principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR) to address global environmental inequities, recognizing that industrialized nations bear greater responsibility due to historical pollution. The principle emerged at the **1972 Stockholm Conference** and was reinforced by the **1987 Brundtland Report**, which emphasized sustainable development, intergenerational equity, and the leadership role of developed countries in global environmental protection.¹⁴

The principle of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR–RC) is the foundational equity norm in the UNFCCC. Under **Kyoto (1997)**, this translated into **Annex I** (developed) countries taking on binding emission reduction targets, while **non-Annex I** (developing countries, including India) had no binding mitigation obligations.

India's Early posture in the negotiations was shaped by three imperatives-

India's early position in climate negotiations was shaped by **three main ideas**: the belief that equity should guide global action, arguing that countries with higher historical and per-capita emissions should take greater responsibility; the need to protect development space so climate rules would not limit India's efforts to reduce poverty, expand industries, and provide electricity to all; and the importance of securing finance and technology from developed countries to support mitigation and adaptation.

India also played a strong role in groups like G77+China and formed alliances such as **BASIC (Brazil, South Africa, India, and China)** and **LMDCs (Like-Minded Developing Countries)** to protect the interests of developing countries. These coalitions helped

India oppose strict climate targets that could harm economic growth. Under the CBDR approach, India stressed the difference between rich and poor countries and linked climate action to finance and technology support. This strategy supported domestic goals like energy access, rural development, and poverty reduction.

India in COP Negotiations- From Rio to COP28

1. Rio to Kyoto: Establishing the Equity Firewall (1992-2000s)

Global efforts to address climate change through intergovernmental negotiations have been underway for nearly three decades. India has been an active player in this process.¹⁵ At the **Rio Earth Summit** and the creation of the **UNFCCC**, India was an architect of the CBDR principle. India's early posture was defensive: it insisted that the developed world, responsible for the bulk of historical emissions, bear the primary mitigation burden and provide finance and technology to developing countries. During the Kyoto Protocol negotiations, India supported binding commitments for Annex I Parties while resisting top-down caps for non-Annex I countries.

India's early climate position strongly supported CBDR and equity and rejected binding emission cuts under the Kyoto Protocol, citing low per-capita emissions and development needs. The Kyoto Protocol, adopted in 1997 and implemented from 2005, placed emission reduction duties mainly on developed countries. The Marrakesh Accords later clarified its rules, with industrialized nations committing to emission cuts while recognizing their greater historical responsibility.¹⁶ India emphasized adaptation, financial support, and technology transfer from developed to developing nations. During COPs from **Berlin (1995)** to **Copenhagen (2009)**, India aligned closely with the G77 and China, resisting attempts to dilute CBDR.

2. Shifting Dynamics: From Copenhagen to Paris (2009-2015)

The Copenhagen Accord of 2009 marked an important change in India's climate policy. India started taking a more flexible approach, where countries made voluntary climate commitments instead of strict legal obligations. The clear division between developed and developing countries began to weaken, and national pledges became more important. Around the same time, India showed greater willingness to act at home by launching the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) in

2008. India began setting targets to reduce the carbon intensity of its economy and increasing its use of renewable energy. At the same time, it continued to strongly demand financial support and capacity-building assistance from developed countries.

3. Cancun Climate Change Conference, 2010

At COP 16 of UNFCCC held in Cancun, Mexico, parties agreed to establish the Green Climate Fund, aimed at providing USD 100 billion annually from 2020 to assist developing countries in addressing climate change and deforestation.¹⁷

And under the Paris Agreement of 2015, India continued to support the idea of fairness in climate action but accepted that countries have different national situations. This allowed each country to set its own climate targets instead of following strict rules. For India, this was important because it protected its development needs while supporting global climate action. During the negotiations, India supported the Paris Agreement because it offered flexibility and voluntary commitments. At the same time, India strongly demanded financial help, technology transfer, and capacity-building for developing countries. It highlighted domestic efforts like the National Action Plan on Climate Change and renewable energy goals. After Paris, India has actively engaged in global cooperation while working towards its 2030 targets and net-zero goal by 2070.¹⁸

4. Rule Making and Implementation: Katowice to Madrid (2018–2019)

While the Paris Rulebook was being negotiated, India worked to make sure the rules were fair for developing countries. It asked for flexible transparency rules so that reporting and monitoring would not place heavy costs or pressure on poorer countries with limited capacity. India also paid close attention to the carbon market rules under Article 6 (of Paris Agreement), which deal with buying and selling carbon credits. These talks focused on how emissions are counted, how to avoid double counting, and how countries should adjust their emissions records during trading. For India, these technical discussions were closely linked to fairness. It wanted to stop developed countries from using carbon markets as an easy way to avoid cutting their own emissions. By pushing for strict accounting rules and

safeguards, India aimed to protect developing countries, uphold equity, and keep the principle of CBDR strong within the Paris Agreement.

5. Glasgow and the Panchamrit : Net-Zero Enters India's Vocabulary (2021)

After the Paris Agreement, India began playing a more active role in global climate action. At COP26 in November 2021, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced India's *Panchamrit* goals. These include reaching 500 GW of non-fossil energy capacity by 2030, meeting half of India's energy needs from renewables, cutting projected emissions by one billion tonnes, reducing carbon intensity, and achieving net-zero emissions by 2070.¹⁹ These commitments showed that India accepted long-term climate goals but with more time than developed countries. This helped India balance climate action with economic growth and poverty reduction, while continuing to stress the need for climate finance, technology transfer, and fairness.

India's 2070 net-zero pledge is both symbolic and practical. It shows India's readiness to join the global move toward net zero, while considering its development needs, rising energy demand, and short-term reliance on coal. Climate change is a major global challenge, and for a fast-growing country like India, the transition is complex. India must balance poverty reduction and economic growth with reducing emissions and supporting global climate efforts.²⁰

Operationalizing Net-Zero:

Reaching net-zero emissions requires a clear and realistic plan that links today's actions with long-term climate goals. This begins with well-defined short-term targets, updated national climate commitments, and sector-wise plans for power, industry, transport, buildings, and agriculture. These efforts must be backed by supportive policies such as carbon pricing, market incentives, regulations, and strong energy-efficiency measures. The power sector plays a central role, with rapid growth of renewable energy, better electricity grids, energy storage, and stronger transmission systems. Coal use needs to be gradually reduced while managing financial risks and ensuring a fair transition for workers and communities. Industries must cut emissions through efficiency improvements, electrification, cleaner fuels, green hydrogen, and pilot carbon capture projects, supported

by affordable finance and global cooperation. In transport and cities, electric vehicles, expanded public transport, cleaner fuels, and efficient urban planning are essential. Forests, land, and agriculture contribute by increasing carbon sinks and resilience, while strong finance, technology, skills, and transparent monitoring systems support the entire transition.

Continuities and Shifts: Interpreting the CBDR's Net-Zero Move

India's move from a strict CBDR approach to embracing a net-zero target shows both continuity and change in its climate diplomacy. The country still bases its position on equity, arguing that nations with high historical emissions must take greater responsibility. It continues to prioritize development, insisting that poverty reduction, energy access, and industrial growth must shape the pace of its climate actions. India also repeatedly stresses that greater ambition from developing countries is only possible if they receive reliable, concessional finance and affordable technology. These long-standing priorities explain India's cautious language on coal and its constant demand for predictable financial support. At the same time, several important shifts have taken place.

India has changed its approach from opposing global climate rules to actively helping shape them. It now plays a role in designing systems such as carbon markets under Article 6 (of Paris Agreement), transparency rules, and the Global Stock-take, making sure they remain fair and recognize differences between countries. India has also shown leadership through initiatives like the International Solar Alliance (ISA) and the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure, moving beyond talks to real action on the ground. It has introduced ideas like **Mission LiFE (Lifestyle For Environment)**, which encourages people to adopt sustainable lifestyles along with using clean technologies. Finally, India's decision to adopt a 2070 net-zero target is an important diplomatic move, but it is clearly linked to fairness, recognition of past emissions by developed countries, and the need for affordable finance and useful technology transfer to make the transition possible. ²¹

6. Sharm el-Sheikh and Loss & Damage (2022)

COP27 resulted in a historic decision to create a Loss and Damage fund to support countries already suffering serious impacts

of climate change. India strongly supported this step because it matches its long-standing focus on climate justice and fairness. India argued that poorer countries, which have contributed the least to climate change but face the greatest risks, deserve financial help. The fund is a major diplomatic success for India and reflects years of effort to keep equity, compensation, and global solidarity central to climate negotiations.

7. Dubai (COP28) and a New Fossil Fuel Language (2023)

COP28 ended with an important decision that, for the first time, directly mentioned fossil fuels and called for a global move away from them. This was a major change, as earlier COP meetings avoided such language. Although countries were not asked to immediately stop using fossil fuels, the decision signaled that the world must shift toward cleaner energy. India participated positively in the talks but stressed that any transition must be fair and supported by finance and technology, while respecting development needs. After COP28, India continues to focus on equity, climate justice, and CBDR. It argues that rich countries must take greater responsibility, provide reliable climate finance, and create space for developing countries to grow. India supports a just transition but resists a rapid phase-out of coal, which remains important for its energy security.²² In COP29 and afterwards, India has strongly criticized weak and unclear climate finance promises, calling them insufficient and lacking transparency. India has also introduced new ideas such as the Green Credit Initiative to increase carbon absorption and encourage voluntary environmental action. By working closely with other Global South countries, India presents itself as a major voice for climate-vulnerable nations while also protecting its own development requirements. Overall, India's stance after COP28 reflects a careful balance: taking climate responsibility seriously, demanding fair global burden-sharing, resisting unfair pressure, and seeking practical, finance-supported pathways to reach its long-term net-zero and sustainability goals.

Shift in India's Climate Diplomacy after COP 28

After COP28, India's role in global climate talks changed in several ways. For the first time, countries agreed on language calling for a move away from fossil fuels, which increased pressure on all

nations, including India, to shift faster to clean energy. Although the wording was flexible, it signaled a stronger global push to reduce coal use, which matters for India because coal is still important for its energy needs. COP28 also gave more attention to climate finance, technology transfer, and support for developing countries. This allowed India to continue stressing fairness and climate justice. In the period after COP28, India emphasized that any energy transition must be supported by enough funding and affordable technology. Overall, India supports global climate goals but insists that its development needs, energy security, and fair access to finance must shape how fast it moves toward clean energy.

A.(COP 29) in Baku, Azerbaijan (2024)

COP29 was held in Baku, Azerbaijan, from 11 to 22 November 2024 at a time when climate change impacts were becoming more frequent and severe. Countries met to review progress on cutting emissions, managing climate impacts, and increasing climate finance. For India, COP29 was important because it needed to balance sustainable development with global climate responsibilities. India strongly called for fairness for developing countries, more climate finance, and easier access to green technologies. It also highlighted its achievements in renewable energy and environmental policies to show that growth and climate action can go together. Despite challenges, India's role at COP29 showed its growing importance in global climate diplomacy. The conference achieved key outcomes, including agreement on the **New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG)** to increase climate finance and progress on carbon markets under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement.²³ COP29 offers India a unique opportunity to assert its leadership in global climate negotiations. By promoting resource transfers from the Global North, showcasing its innovative climate solutions, strengthening industrial partnerships for green technologies, and demonstrating its domestic decarbonization efforts.²⁴

B.(COP 30) in Belem, Brazil (2025)

At COP30 in Belém, Brazil, India is clearly focusing on fairness, climate justice, and realistic action. India is asking developed countries to provide reliable and affordable climate finance, especially for adaptation and for fully putting the Loss and Damage Fund into

practice. It also wants one clear definition of climate finance so funding can be tracked honestly and transparently. Another key demand from India is easy access to clean and low-cost technologies. India argues that high prices, patents, and strict intellectual property rules should not prevent developing countries from using renewable energy and climate-friendly technologies.²⁵

India is also stressing the need for a just transition, meaning that climate policies should protect workers, support vulnerable communities, and allow developing countries to continue growing while reducing emissions. A key part of India's position is the principle of “**Common But Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities**” (CBDR-RC), which means that wealthy nations with higher historical emissions must take on greater responsibility. India has appreciated some decisions made at COP-30, including the creation of a Just Transition Mechanism and new progress on the Global Goal on Adaptation. Finally, India has warned against unilateral trade actions like carbon border taxes, saying such measures could damage global trust and fairness in climate cooperation.

India's Strategic Climate Diplomacy in a Changing Global Landscape

India's climate diplomacy is increasingly influenced by global politics, including rivalry between major powers, trade pressures such as carbon border taxes, and the need to secure supply chains for clean-energy materials. Climate diplomacy has become an important part of India's foreign policy. It gives India a platform to show global leadership, encourages progress in its domestic economy, and is essential for protecting its large population and growing economy from climate risks.²⁶

Addressing climate change and sustainability is extremely important, especially for a country like India with a large population and diverse ecosystems. Much of India's economy depends on climate-sensitive sectors such as agriculture, making it more vulnerable to climate impacts. Because of this, India's approach to climate change is not limited to domestic policy but is also a key part of its international diplomacy and global partnerships. At the same time, India uses climate cooperation to strengthen international relationships while protecting

its strategic independence. Looking ahead, India's role in future COP negotiations must balance strong principles with practical action. This includes working closely with groups like **G77+China** and **BASIC** to demand fair climate finance, stronger support for Loss and Damage, and timelines that reflect equity and historical responsibility. Alongside negotiations, India is also focusing on real solutions through initiatives such as the International Solar Alliance and the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure, as well as bilateral projects in renewable energy manufacturing, green hydrogen, and large-scale energy storage.²⁷

Challenges and Critiques

India's climate efforts face many connected challenges that affect both its domestic policies and its position in global negotiations. The path toward achieving net-zero emissions by 2070 is difficult and full of gaps. One of the biggest and most urgent challenges is India's continued dependence on coal and other fossil fuels for meeting its energy needs.²⁸ Coal still plays a major role in India's energy system and is important for meeting growing electricity needs. Moving away from coal will require affordable clean energy options, better power grids, energy storage, and fair plans for coal-dependent regions. At the same time, climate impacts are uneven across India. Coastal areas, drought-prone regions, and Himalayan states face higher risks and need stronger adaptation support. These challenges are made worse by limited climate finance from developed countries, which slows renewable growth and local adaptation efforts.²⁹

India also faces gaps in infrastructure and the difficult task of balancing economic growth with environmental protection. Although India is committed to climate action, reaching long-term goals will be challenging. Global climate politics add to this difficulty, as developed countries often try to weaken key UNFCCC principles like equity, historical responsibility, and CBDR. Accepting these principles would place greater responsibility on developed nations, making climate agreements harder to achieve.³⁰

Despite criticisms, CBDR still influences climate diplomacy. In 2015 when the Paris Agreement came into being it included self-differentiation rules enabling each country to set their individual goals and targets. Despite legal weakening, CBDR maintains its essence as

the basis for current climate policy discussions.³¹ Despite ambitious targets and actions across different sectors, India still faces an important policy gap: it does not have a national carbon budget. This has become a weakness in its climate planning. A carbon budget, which many developed countries already use, sets a clear limit on total emissions in line with global temperature goals. The main challenge for India is not a lack of commitment, but the absence of a single, clear framework to guide and coordinate its climate efforts.³²

Another challenge in India's move toward clean energy is protecting workers in coal and fossil fuel industries. Millions of people depend on these jobs, so a fair transition is necessary. This means providing reskilling and upskilling opportunities so workers can find new livelihoods. According to a CEEW study, about 5 million people are directly employed in India's coal sector.³³ India faces major challenges because of its very high population density, especially in cities. The growing number of large cities with over a million people has increased environmental pressure. In addition, traditional farming practices also add to climate-related problems.³⁴

Other Challenges for India in Achieving Net-Zero Emissions by 2070 are-

India faces several challenges in reaching net-zero emissions by 2070 and it still depends heavily on fossil fuels and does not yet have enough renewable energy capacity. The slow growth of electric vehicle infrastructure, especially the lack of public charging stations and high costs, limits EV adoption. Carbon capture technologies are developing slowly. Large investment needs and policy challenges also slow progress, while rising population and consumer demand increase energy use, making sustainable growth more difficult, are other challenges.³⁵

Recommendations for India's Negotiation Strategy

Climate change is a global problem caused by both current and historical **Greenhouse gas (GHG)** emissions, mostly from developed countries. India's per capita emissions are low, but it is committed to action based on equity and the UNFCCC principle of CBDR-RC. Developed countries should lead in cutting emissions and provide finance, technology, and capacity support to developing nations. At COP26 in 2021, India set a net-zero target for 2070 and

submitted its **Long-Term Low Emission Strategy (LT-LEDS)** in 2022 to reaffirm this goal.³⁶

India is just beginning to transition its energy system and has many technology options to choose from. Reaching its net-zero target will require careful planning. Clear and informed policies are needed to guide India toward a sustainable path for reducing emissions.³⁷ The impacts of climate change are pushing policymakers to take immediate steps to cut emissions. Some large countries have announced plans to achieve net-zero in the future, sending a clear signal for faster action. India is an important player in the global climate debate, and the world closely watches its decision on setting a net-zero target.³⁸ A key priority for India is to get affordable finance to retire coal, strengthen the power grid, and reduce industrial emissions. India also supports new tools like green loans, guarantees, grants, and debt-for-climate swaps to lower financial risks. However, India's current funding for climate action is not enough, showing the need for stronger policies to turn climate goals into real action.³⁹

India should focus on affordable access to clean technologies, joint R&D, and collaboration on green hydrogen, energy storage, and carbon capture. Effective coordination between central, state, and local governments, supported by strong monitoring and just transition plans, is essential. India can promote net-zero as a driver of economic growth and press wealthy nations for transparent climate finance. Enhancing carbon sinks through afforestation, sustainable farming, and programs like the **Green India Mission**, along with climate-resilient infrastructure and green transport initiatives like **FAME (Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of (Hybrid &) Electric Vehicles)**, and the climate-smart agriculture practices such as, **Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY)** will help reduce emissions and build resilience.⁴⁰

The government should strengthen policies for renewable energy by providing incentives to attract investments. Funding should focus on improving solar technology, such as efficient solar panels and cheaper production methods. Similar investments are needed for better wind turbines and offshore wind systems. Energy security should be ensured through storage solutions like batteries and pumped hydro.

Long-term planning is important, prioritizing a shift from fossil fuels to a cleaner, greener energy future. ⁴¹

Concluding Remarks-

India's climate diplomacy has evolved from strongly defending CBDR to announcing a net-zero target for 2070. This is more a change in approach than in principles—India still puts equity and fairness at the center of its policies. India now works within a global system that expects participation from all countries. Policies like **Panchamrit**, the updated NDC, and the long-term strategy show India is willing to align with global climate goals if timelines are fair and backed by finance and technology.

India's success depends on turning promises into action: lowering green investment costs, supporting workers in coal regions, building clean-tech manufacturing, and securing international agreements that ensure fairness. Its net-zero pledge shows a shift to proactive leadership while balancing development needs with climate responsibility. To succeed, India needs predictable finance, affordable technology, strong partnerships, clear plans, near-term actions, and ongoing advocacy for fair global climate rules.

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