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India at COP31: Financing the Transition, Preserving Development Choices

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Summary

India approaches the Conference of Parties (COP) 31 seeking finance, technology and flexibility to pursue development alongside decarbonisation. New Delhi must secure practical support for adaptation, industrial transformation and energy security while shaping rules that preserve national choices. Success depends on turning negotiating principles into credible arrangements for implementation.

India approaches the Conference of Parties (COP) 31 in Antalya with an overriding objective – to ensure that future climate action is accompanied by finance, technology and recognition of distinct development circumstances. As negotiations now enter their final week, New Delhi seeks to preserve national discretion over the transition while strengthening international support for implementation. The underlying bargain concerns who pays, who sets the rules and whether cooperation expands India's domestic capabilities.

Climate finance anchors this position. India's opening statement reaffirmed the developed countries' obligations under Article 9.1 of the Paris Agreement and the importance of public resources for the developing economies. New Delhi's objective is distributive and practical. International support can help support adaptation and decarbonisation without forcing governments to divert scarce resources from development. Finance, therefore, shapes the credibility of demands for climate ambition.

The dispute extends beyond just amounts. COP29 established a goal of at least US$300 billion (S$386.7 billion) annually by 2035, alongside efforts to scale climate flows from all sources. India needs clearer distinctions between resources provided by developed governments and investment mobilised commercially. A useful COP31 outcome would improve accountability for delivery, financing terms and access, rather than allow aggregate figures to obscure inadequate public support. India will push for this outcome.

India also seeks to protect the nationally determined character of mitigation. Its third Nationally Determined Contribution targets a 47 per cent reduction in gross domestic product emissions intensity from 2005 levels by 2035 and approximately 60 per cent non-fossil installed electricity capacity. The latter explicitly depends on technology transfer and low-cost international finance. These commitments provide a basis for arguing that domestic action and external support are intertwined and must advance together.

Installed capacity, however, does not automatically translate into reliable clean electricity. India's interest lies in financing the systems that enable clean energy deployment through transmission, storage, flexible generation and stronger distribution networks. The practical

implication is that COP negotiations must address implementation bottlenecks that stall mitigation. International commitments become credible when they improve the affordability and reliability of domestic energy transitions, including the ability to increase and deploy renewable energy.

Energy security complicates negotiations over fossil fuels. New Delhi will likely reject a fossil-fuel phase-out, again insisting that global climate action reflect national circumstances. Türkiye's voluntary electrification pledge sharpens this issue; greater electricity consumption delivers climate benefits only when accompanied by cleaner supply. India will push for support for that transformation while resisting symmetric timelines that disregard differences in energy demand, infrastructure and development.

Adaptation is also consequential. India wants the Global Goal on Adaptation's indicators to remain voluntary and avoid becoming conditions for accessing finance. Its objective should be to secure resources that strengthen resilience in agriculture, water management, public health and vulnerable settlements. Measurement can help identify needs and track outcomes but elaborate reporting requirements could disadvantage institutions with limited administrative capacity and delay support where vulnerabilities are greatest.

Just transition offers another opportunity to connect international negotiations with domestic priorities. On 16 November 2026, India advocated a country-driven mechanism covering employment, social protection, adaptation, poverty eradication and energy access. This broad approach recognises that transition costs extend beyond retiring energy assets. For India, an effective mechanism would support workers, communities and public institutions through finance, technical assistance and capacity building tailored to local circumstances.

Technology access connects these priorities to India's economic statecraft. New Delhi has identified cost, intellectual property and trade barriers as obstacles to technology transfer. The strategic objective should extend to learning, research partnerships and domestic production capabilities. Affordable access matters immediately; the ability to adapt and develop technologies over time. India should therefore press for cooperation that strengthens suppliers, technical skills and innovation.

Trade measures create a real concern. From Delhi's perspective, climate-related import requirements like the European Union's Common Border Adjustment Mechanism impose adjustment costs on exporters without providing corresponding support. India should combine its objections with proposals for transparent accounting, technical assistance and accessible decarbonisation finance. This would connect concerns about fairness with practical pathways for reducing production emissions.

Coalition management will influence India's negotiating effectiveness. Its alignment with G77, China, BASIC and like-minded developing countries strengthens demands concerning equity and greater financial support. Yet developing countries differ over fossil fuels, vulnerability and mitigation urgency. India should build issue-specific partnerships, especially on adaptation, technology and affordable finance while demonstrating

responsiveness to smaller states. Leadership requires proposals that others can use, alongside defence of national priorities.

Success at COP31 in Antalya should be assessed through implementation and more focus on clearer finance arrangements, accessible adaptation support, workable transition assistance and stronger technological cooperation. India's challenge is to preserve development choices while showing how those choices can deliver climate action and progress. That combination would legitimise its equity claims. The test is whether COP31 outcomes reduce the financial, technological and institutional barriers that slow climate action at home while making India an effective partner for countries facing similar constraints and vulnerabilities.

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