

Your present
circumstances don't
determine where
you can go. They
merely determine
where you start.

NIDO QUBEIN

Martha Brook

Important Issues of the Day

- **India Development Update report – Page No.1 , Prelims**
- **Timely inaction – Page No.8 , GS 3**
- **India's academic culture – Page No.8 , GS 2**
- **Nari Shakti – Page No. 8, GS 1,2**
- **PM Mudra Yojana – Prelims**
- **Elephanta Island – Prelims**
- **COP 33 – Prelims**

PM Mudra Yojana



- **The Pradhan Mantri MUDRA (Micro Units Development & Refinance Agency) Yojana is a flagship scheme designed to provide collateral-free loans to non-corporate, non-farm small/micro-enterprises.**
- **It operates through a refinancing model, where MUDRA provides support to banks, NBFCs, and MFIs to lend to grassroots entrepreneurs.**
- **Launched in: 2015.**

Aim:

- **To Fund the Unfunded by bringing small enterprises into the formal financial system.**
- **To encourage entrepreneurship among the youth (Yuva Shakti) and women (Nari Shakti).**
- **To generate large-scale employment opportunities at the local level.**

Three Loan Categories: The loans are tailored to the stage of growth of the business:

- **Shishu: Loans up to ₹50,000 (for start-ups/early stages).**
- **Kishore: Loans from ₹50,000 to ₹5 lakh (for established businesses seeking expansion).**
- **Tarun: Loans from ₹5 lakh up to ₹10 lakh (for diversification or larger scaling).**
- **Tarun Plus: covers loans above ₹10 lakh and up to ₹20 lakh.**

- **Collateral-Free: No security or collateral is required from the borrower, lowering the barrier to entry for the poor.**
- **MUDRA Card: Borrowers receive a RuPay debit card for the loan amount, allowing for flexible withdrawals and management of working capital.**
- **Processing Charges: Generally, there are no processing fees for Shishu loans, making them highly accessible for micro-entrepreneurs.**

Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana is aimed at (2016)

- (a) bringing the small entrepreneurs into formal financial system**
- (b) providing loans to poor farmers for cultivating particular crops**
- (c) providing pensions to old and destitute persons**
- (d) funding the voluntary organizations involved in the promotion of skill development and employment generation**

India's FY 27 growth outlook cut to 6.6% from 7.2%: World Bank

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

The World Bank has revised downwards India's growth outlook for 2026-27 to 6.6% from 7.2%, citing the impact of the war in West Asia on household and government consumption, as well as on industrial activity.

The India Development Update report by the World Bank said that "in the absence of the conflict", India's GDP growth was projected at 7.2%, a reflection of better-than-expected growth in 2025-26, "strong initial momentum" in the fourth quarter of that year and a "broad pro-growth reform agenda".

"Growth is now project-

Revised figures

India's GDP growth would have been 7.2% in absence of the war, says the report

OUTLOOK FOR FY27:

- Real GDP growth: **6.6% vs 7.6%** in FY26
- Inflation (Consumer Price Index): **4.9% vs 2.3%** in FY26
- Net FDI, inflow (as % of GDP): **0.6 vs 0.5** in FY26

ed at 6.6% in FY27, reflecting headwinds from the Middle East conflict – assuming an extended disruption in global energy (oil and gas) supply till end-2026," the report said.

The India Development Update report is a compa-

nion to the South Asia Economic Update 2026, which was released on April 8. That report had projected growth in South Asia to slow to 6.3% in 2026 from 7% in 2025 due to disruptions in global energy markets.

The World Bank's Acting Director for India Paul Procee noted that there are things that can be done to boost growth. "Boosting private sector-led growth will be critical to strengthening economic resilience and supporting more young people to enter the workforce," Mr. Procee said during the release of the report.

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What is Gross Domestic Product (GDP)?

- **About: GDP is the total monetary value of all final goods and services produced within a country's borders during a specific period (usually a year or a quarter).**

Types of GDP:

- **Nominal GDP: Measured at current market prices, without adjusting for inflation. Useful for same-year comparisons but not reliable across years.**
- **Real GDP: Adjusted for inflation using the GDP deflator. Reflects the actual quantity of goods and services produced. It enables comparison of economic growth over time.**
- **The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) has revised India's GDP base year to 2022–23, replacing the 2011–12 series, effective February 2026.**

- **GDP measures the value of a country's final goods and services (those purchased by the final user) generated in a specific time period (say, a quarter or a year). It includes all of the output produced within a country's borders.**
- **GDP = Private consumption + gross investment + government investment + government spending + (exports – imports)**
- **Private Consumption Expenditure refers to the value of all goods and services purchased for consumption by households.**
- **Government Consumption Expenditure refers to the value of all goods and services purchased for consumption by the government.**
- **Gross Investment refers to the total value of all capital investments made in the economy.**

Elephanta Island



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- **Elephanta Island, locally known as Gharapuri (City of Caves), is a UNESCO World Heritage site located in the Mumbai Harbour.**
- **It is world-renowned for its majestic rock-cut cave temples, primarily dedicated to the Hindu god Shiva, which represent the pinnacle of Indian rock-cut art and sculpture.**
- **Original Name: Local inhabitants called it Gharapuri.**
- **The Elephanta Name: The name Elephanta was given by Portuguese explorers in the 16th century after they found a massive monolithic stone elephant near the island's landing area.**

Kingdoms Associated:

- **Kalachuris of Mahishmati:** The 6th-century excavations (including the recent coins of King Krishnaraja) suggest the Kalachuris were the primary patrons of the main caves.
- **Konkan Mauryas:** Historical records suggest they ruled the region before the Kalachuris.
- **Chalukyas & Rashtrakutas:** Subsequent dynasties that maintained or contributed to the island's religious and strategic importance.
- **Portuguese & British:** Later colonial powers who used the island for military and administrative purposes.

Key Characteristics of Elephanta:

- **Main Cave (Cave 1):** A sprawling 60,000-square-foot rock-cut temple featuring a complex layout of halls, pillars, and shrines.
- **Sadashiva (Trimurti):** The most iconic sculpture on the island, a 20-foot high masterpiece depicting Shiva as the Creator, Preserver, and Destroyer.
- **Gangadhara & Ardhanarishvara:** Elaborate relief panels depicting the descent of the Ganges and the union of Shiva and Parvati as half-male and half-female.
- **Geological Composition:** The caves are carved out of solid basalt rock, typical of the Deccan Trap formations.
- **Dual Religious Influence:** While primarily Shaivite (Hindu), there are also smaller groups of Buddhist stupas on the island, indicating a syncretic religious history.

Timely inaction

Slowing growth and rising inflation necessitated unchanged rates

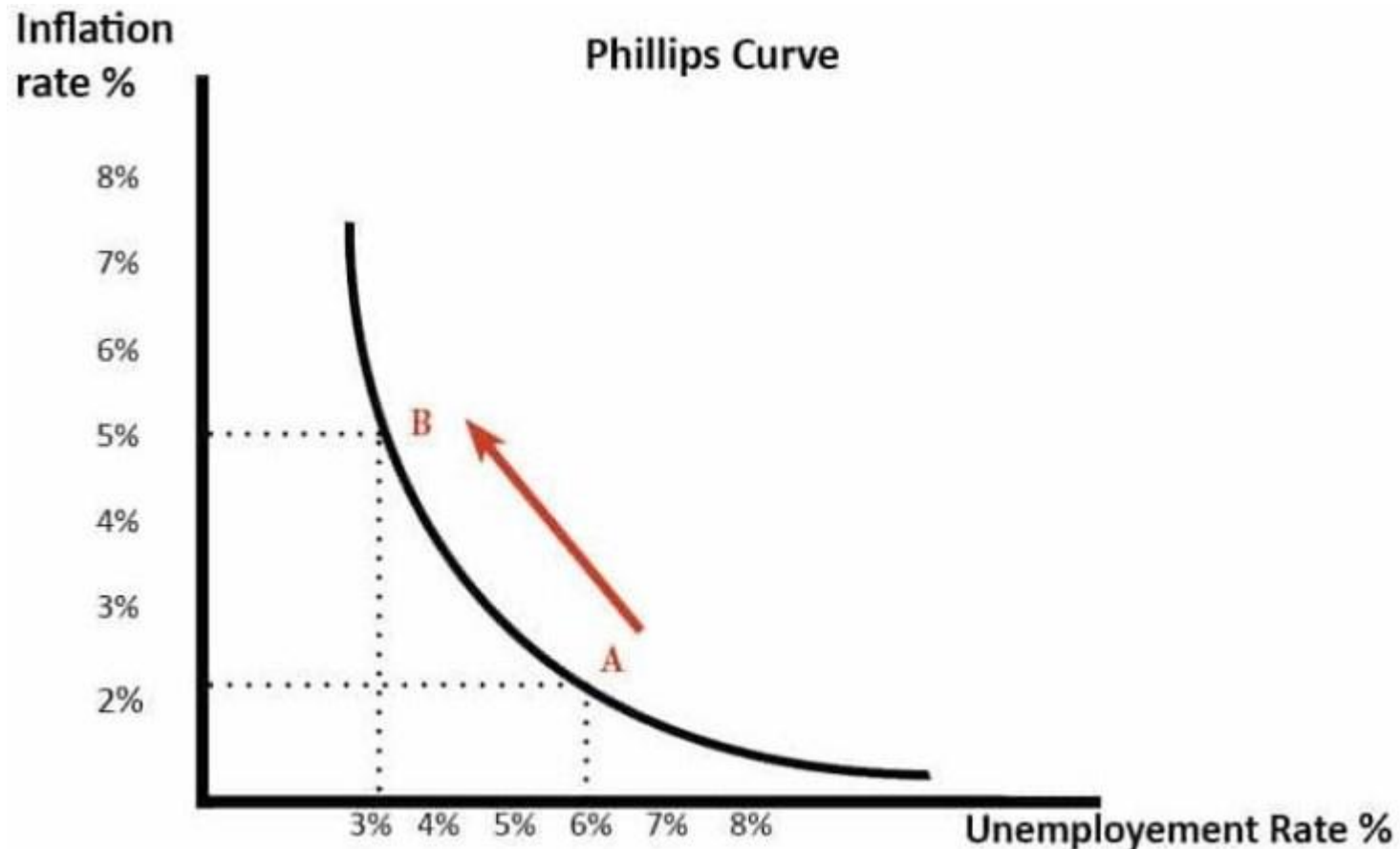
The RBI Monetary Policy Committee's (MPC) decision to keep interest rates unchanged – a “wait and watch” approach, in the Governor's words – is a sensible move. At a time when hasty words and deeds have roiled world markets, economies, and even households, a measured policy response was the need of the hour. The challenge before the MPC is that the main tool it has – the repo rate – impacts growth and inflation in opposite ways. That is, if it had raised rates to try to contain an anticipated surge in inflation, this would have hurt growth. On the other hand, if it lowered rates to boost growth, this would have pushed inflation up. The war in West Asia has resulted in both of these undesirable outcomes: supply chain constraints have pushed up costs while also dragging down growth. A rate change at this juncture could have made matters significantly worse and further dampened the mood in the economy. In his speech, RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra predicted that India's GDP would grow 6.9% in 2026-27. Given that this is still the first month of the financial year, the forecast is likely to change considerably over the subsequent MPC announcements. For example, the MPC in April last year had predicted that growth in 2025-26 would be 6.5%. In contrast, the government's latest estimate for the year is 7.6%. Considerable uncertainty continues to persist in West Asia, with shipping companies

example, the MPC in April last year had predicted that growth in 2025-26 would be 6.5%. In contrast, the government's latest estimate for the year is 7.6%. Considerable uncertainty continues to persist in West Asia, with shipping companies still hesitant to brave the Strait of Hormuz.

All of this, coupled with the fuel constraints, will continue to hamper growth in 2026-27. The RBI lowered its growth forecast for the first quarter by just 0.1 percentage points, which might end up being an over-optimistic reading of the situation. The World Bank's India Development Update report, released on Thursday, predicts a slowdown in industrial growth in India over the course of this financial year. Consumer and government demand, too, is expected to slow as both groups try to tighten their belts. Inflation, on the other hand, is expected to accelerate considerably to 4.6%, according to the RBI. Yet, the MPC was correct not to raise rates since most of the inflationary pressure is due to supply issues rather than demand conditions. Raising rates would not only have slowed growth further, but even the primary objective of containing inflation would not have been met. A lot of factors need to play out before monetary policy can act – the war, the U.S. tariff-related investigations, greater clarity on a potential El Nino impact on the monsoon this year, to name a few. Until then, inaction is the best course of action.

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- Phillips Curve is an economic theory which explains the inverse link between an economy's unemployment rate and inflation rate.



Nari Shakti, India's defining reform for the next decade

Over the past decade, India has done something few nations have achieved at scale: it has moved women's empowerment from intent to infrastructure. This shift did not happen organically; it was designed. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, policy has placed women at the centre of development recognising that when women move forward, entire economies accelerate.

The results are visible and measurable. More than 57 crore bank accounts have been opened under the PM Jan Dhan Yojana, with over 55% held by women, giving millions their first foothold in the formal financial system. Nearly 10 crore women, organised into over 90 lakh self-help groups, are now driving grassroots entrepreneurship and local economic resilience. The Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana has reached over 10.5 crore households, reducing health risks and freeing women from time-intensive labour. Moreover, access to credit has expanded, with close to 70% of MUDRA loans going to women entrepreneurs. Female labour force participation has also risen to nearly 37%, reversing a long-standing decline.

In healthcare, programmes such as the Ayushman Bharat and the Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan have expanded access and reduced vulnerability at critical life stages. Initiatives like the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme have begun to shift deeply embedded social attitudes.

Individually, these are strong programmes. Taken together, they represent a structural shift in how India views women not as recipients of support, but as drivers of growth. For policymakers and administrators, this offers a clear lesson: scale works when design, delivery, and accountability are aligned.

In healthcare, where the author's expertise lies, outcomes improve when systems are built



Sangita Reddy

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Over the next five years, India must invest in preparing women to lead not just electorally, but institutionally

around real needs, and not theoretical models. Where access is simplified; delivery is consistent; and outcomes are tracked, impact follows. And yet, the next phase will demand even greater focus, as the challenge before us is no longer policy creation, it is policy penetration.

The last mile

Despite the scale of programmes, awareness gaps remain. Enrolment is uneven, and last-mile delivery continues to depend on local capacity. For every woman who has accessed opportunity, there are many more who remain on the margins due to lack of access. This is where administrative leadership becomes decisive.

India must move from announcing schemes to ensuring saturation; from measuring outputs to tracking outcomes; and from eligibility on paper to access in practice. District-level ownership, data-driven monitoring, and convergence across departments will be critical. And while technology can accelerate this, it cannot replace on-ground accountability. Therefore, the question for every policymaker is simple: how do we ensure that no eligible woman is left out?

This is where the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam can become one of the most consequential reforms of our time. By expanding women's representation in legislative bodies, it creates the possibility of aligning policy design with lived experience. Women leaders can bring their insights shaped by community realities which can strengthen programmes, and their delivery, targeting, and adoption.

Additionally, the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam when implemented with intent, can trigger a multiplier effect with more women in leadership, more responsive policy, higher participation, and stronger leadership pipelines, making reform self-reinforcing.

Globally, we are entering a decade defined by

knowledge, innovation, and technology. India already has a strong base, with one of the highest proportions of women in STEM education globally. This is an opportune moment to translate this gain into leadership across sectors such as healthcare, science, enterprise, and governance without losing time.

The past decade has shown what is possible when political will aligns with policy design. With today's strong foundation, the implementation of Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam can move empowerment beyond access, to authority.

The way forward

However, representation must translate into capability, and capability must be built through institutional support to ensure that implementation delivers results. Over the next five years, India must invest in preparing women to lead not just electorally, but institutionally. This means structured mentorship, policy exposure, and administrative support systems that enable effective governance.

It also means rethinking how the country designs policy itself. Programmes must be simpler to access and faster to deliver. Feedback loops must be strengthened so that policy evolves with need. And success must be measured not just by coverage, but by change in outcomes across sectors. As India moves towards its vision of becoming a developed nation by 2047, this is not a peripheral agenda – it is central to its success. Women's participation is directly linked to economic growth, social stability, and institutional effectiveness.

If India can achieve saturation in access, strengthen participation, and enable leadership, it will not just empower its women – it will redefine its growth trajectory. For policymakers and administrators, the mandate is clear: the time to implement is now.

- **Over the past decade, India has done something few nations have achieved at scale: it has moved women's empowerment from intent to infrastructure.**
- **The results are visible and measurable. More than 57 crore bank accounts have been opened under the PM Jan Dhan Yojana, with over 55% held by women, giving millions their first foothold in the formal financial system.**
- **Nearly 10 crore women, organised into over 90 lakh self-help groups, are now driving grassroots entrepreneurship and local economic resilience.**
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- **Individually, these are strong programmes.**
- **Taken together, they represent a structural shift in how India views women not as recipients of support, but as drivers of growth. For policymakers and administrators, this offers a clear lesson: scale works when design, delivery, and accountability are aligned.**
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Making scholarships integral to India's academic culture

Page No.8 , GS 2

If India is to take its Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education to 50%, the question is not only how many institutions the country can build, but who is actually able to walk through their gates and graduate.

India has been making gradual progress to expand capacity; the number of higher educational institutions has grown from 51,534 (2014-15) to over 70,000 last year, as per the 2025-26 Economic Survey. Yet the national GER stands at 29.5 (2022-23). Such limited participation highlights that seats alone do not create students. Education transforms lives when access, affordability, and academic quality come together. For many young Indians, especially in second-and third-tier towns, the binding constraint is not aspiration; it is the cost and risk of participation. This is why scholarships cannot remain a peripheral add-on to the system. They need to be designed, and tailored as an integral and embedded pathway into higher education.

A pressing need

The country is witnessing three intersecting challenges. There is an access challenge across regions and social groups; an affordability challenge that turns higher education into a long-term investment for families; and a quality challenge that determines whether and to what extent enrolment translates into true learning and occupational pursuit. Enrolment rises when those who qualify can afford to participate, and when institutions are confident that diversity and merit will strengthen, not dilute, academic life.

India knows this well: there is a lot of talent that is widely distributed, but with no opportunity. Increasing enrolments will depend less on convincing already advantaged families and more on releasing the pool of capable students who are currently held back by cost, distance, and uncertainty about the benefits of enrolment. Scholarships sit precisely at this hinge point. They are not only instruments of financial support; they can also mould a student's life, ensuring academic fulfilment as well as overall individual enhancement through provisions beyond material aid, such as leadership development, exposure to a wider world of interests, and career guidance.

The Department of Higher Education supports students through scholarships, interest subsidies on education loans, and credit guarantees. The National Scholarship Portal functions as a common window for State schemes, and hosts information on scholarship programmes across



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Scholarships sit at the intersection of equity, quality, and growth. They influence who and how many enter higher education, and who persists

ministries, departments and regulatory bodies. One such programme is the Central Sector Scheme of Scholarship for College and University Students that provides up to 82,000 scholarships each year across undergraduate, postgraduate, and professional courses. Alongside this, corporate foundations, trusts, and non-profits have also created well-known programmes, often focused on merit-cum-means in fields such as engineering and management.

While this is meaningful progress, most scholarships are limited in number, and are still treated as financial plug-ins. The deeper question is whether scholarships can become a pathway which students actively opt into not only for financial reasons, but also for academic community and mentorship.

Lessons from history

India's own history should be the first source of inspiration. In the ancient institution of higher learning, *Takshashila*, students were known to have had as many as five options to pay their education fees: pay up front; work with and learn from the teachers; defer and pay after graduation; receive scholarships from home regions; or rely on support from a charitable community for disadvantaged students. The principle was straightforward – ability should not be turned away for lack of means, and that institutions should find ways to welcome talent.

The opportunity before India is not only to improve scholarships, but to reimagine what a scholarship represents. One can imagine scholarships that are designed as multi-year commitments rather than annual renewals, giving students the confidence to plan their academic lives with a certain stability. Institutional density and enrolment can be studied in order to design region-based scholarships that focus on underserved States and districts. One can also imagine programme-specific pathways that link scholarships to areas of national and regional need. A scholarship attached to a vocational degree in artificial intelligence, advanced manufacturing, or healthcare, anchored in a district with low participation but high demand, could raise enrolment while strengthening skills and employability.

Public policy and regulation can gently encourage this shift. Incentives such as tax benefits for endowments, or matching funds through private philanthropy, can attract long-term capital into scholarships that are designed to grow and sustain.

Performance-linked frameworks can recognise and reward institutions that demonstrate outcomes across merit, need, and potential. India already has early examples of what such thinking can look like. Ashoka University evaluates financial aid independently of academic admission, following a need-sensitive process where a student's ability to pay is assessed separately from the admission decision. About 20% students receive free education owing to a 100% scholarship, and roughly half of the students receive some form of financial support, while maintaining strong academic standards. The Indian School of Business (ISB) has built a donor-supported scholarship ecosystem across categories that reflect merit and need, including support for those from the armed forces and those who are returning to the development sector. Every year, the ISB awards between 250 and 280 scholarships across its programmes, and notably, 40% of the founding class of the recently launched PGP-Young Leaders programme is supported by scholarships. In both cases, scholarships are not an afterthought. They are critical to the kind of academic community these institutions are trying to build.

International experience reinforces the point. Whether it be multidisciplinary scholarship programmes at U.S. universities or provincial and city-level scholarships in China aligned to local development priorities, the most effective systems treat scholarships as a core part of their academic cultures.

From the margins to the centre

India still needs to expand and diversify its higher educational system. But expansion alone will not deliver a 50% enrolment ratio that also deepens learning and social mobility. Meaningful absorption can only happen when capable students are supported and inspired to look ahead, regardless of where they come from.

This is not a narrow funding conversation; it is about building an ecosystem. Scholarships sit at the intersection of equity, quality, and growth. They influence who and how many enter higher education, and who persists. They shape the social and intellectual life of campuses and the credibility of institutions. They also contribute to the nation's trajectory, throwing light on how its talent is discovered, understood, and developed.

If the goal is not only more students, but also more mobility and national capability, then scholarships deserve to move from the margins to the centre of our higher education strategy.

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- **Education transforms lives when access, affordability, and academic quality come together.**

- **For many young Indians, especially in second-and third-tier towns, the binding constraint is not aspiration; it is the cost and risk of participation.**
- **This is why scholarships cannot remain a peripheral add-on to the system. They need to be designed, and tailored as an integral and embedded pathway into higher education.**
- **The country is witnessing three intersecting challenges. There is an access challenge across regions and social groups; an affordability challenge that turns higher education into a long-term investment for families; and a quality challenge that determines whether and to what extent enrolment translates into true learning and occupational pursuit.**
- **Enrolment rises when those who qualify can afford to participate, and when institutions are confident that diversity and merit will strengthen, not dilute, academic life.**

COP 33



- **India has withdrawn its bid to host COP 33 in 2028, according to reports.**
- **India had earlier expressed interest at COP 28 (Dubai, 2023).**

- **COP 33 scheduled for 2028**
- **India withdrew after review of commitments**
- **No official government statement yet**
- **South Korea now only country interested**

- **COP hosting rotates among 5 UN regional groups:**
 - **African States**
 - **Asia Pacific States**
 - **Eastern European States**
 - **Latin America & Caribbean**
 - **Western Europe & Others**

- **Upcoming COPs**
- **COP 30: Brazil**
- **COP 31: Turkey & Australia**
- **COP 32 (2027): Ethiopia**
- **COP 33 (2028): To be decided**

India's COP Hosting History

- **India hosted COP 8 (2002)**
- **Only time India hosted COP**

By 2035, India aims to:

- **60% electricity from non fossil sources**
- **Reduce emissions intensity by 47%**
- **Increase carbon sink by 3.5 to 4 billion tonnes CO₂**

Thank You!

