

Green Coverage: How Indian Print Media Is Shaping The Sustainability Narrative On Climate

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Abstract

This study examines India's most widely circulated two national newspapers, The Times of India and Dainik Bhaskar, and frames and prioritizes coverage related to climate change and sustainable development. Using a qualitative content analysis approach, the front pages and editorial pages of both newspapers published between 27 February and 23 March 2025, a period encompassing key environmental observances from National Science Day to World Water Day. The findings reveal a significant underrepresentation of climate and sustainability coverage accounted for less than 1.3% of front-page news items in both newspapers. The Times of India did not publish a single editorial piece addressing climate change or sustainability sustainability-related article during the study period, underscoring a concerning editorial gap in environmental discourse. Whereas Dainik Bhaskar newspaper offered minimal but visible coverage, including a half-page editorial feature on World Water Day. The results suggest that despite growing environmental challenges, Indian mainstream print media continues to prioritize political and governance reporting over long-term ecological concerns. This study highlights the urgent need for media organizations to recalibrate their editorial strategies and amplify coverage of sustainability and climate change to support informed public engagement and policy discourse.

Keywords Sustainability Communication, Climate Change Coverage, Environmental Journalism, Media Discourse Analysis, Content Analysis, Public Awareness, and Environment.

INTRODUCTION:

With the growth of the human population, the exploitation of nature for food and housing development has increased rapidly. Its biggest result is being seen in the form of climate change. Prestigious organizations like the United Nations, WHO, and NOAA are supporting this as humanity's biggest global challenge[1], [2]. A NASA press report (23 October 2024) clarifies that the effects of human-induced global warming are currently visible and will remain for the next ages, if the major gases continue to be released[3], [4]. According to the IPCC, climate change prevention and adaptation research is on the brink; every additional 1°C global warming is accompanied by a huge increase in production [5]. A study by the US EPA states that the annual amount of ground-level ozone (ground-level O₃) is increasing, which is causing an increase in smog and air pollution. The IPCC report (2007) mentions that extreme weather conditions (like heatwaves) make ozone-emitting chemicals act faster and lead to increased respiratory toxicity. The IPCC and other studies suggest that immediate and coordinated action is necessary to address the impacts of global warming. This includes developing and implementing effective adaptation and mitigation strategies across various sectors[6]. In India, Wired reports that cities like Delhi experienced significant increases in short-term ozone during heatwaves, leading to increased respiratory toxicity[7]. These reports clearly show that the whole world is worried about the deteriorating situation

of the environment. In such a situation, the responsibility of the media, which is called the fourth pillar of democracy, increases further. It is expected that the media should take up the environment-related issues seriously and play an active role in spreading public awareness. The role of print media in India has always been commendable. It started with the freedom movement of India. Print media has also played a big role in the social reforms and movement being run to eradicate the evils prevalent in society at that time. During the freedom movement, many freedom fighters like Mahatma Gandhi, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, etc., edited the newspapers themselves. They raised their voice against the oppressive policies of the British [8].

They took forward the Swadeshi movement. Similarly, after independence, when the Constitution of India was made, the media was given the status of the fourth pillar of democracy. Print media has played a big role in social campaigns from before independence to after [9]. In recent years, the media, especially the print media, has done the work of taking campaigns like women empowerment, Beti Padhao, Beti Bachao, and Swachh Bharat to every home. Along with this, print media has also played a big role by keeping in mind climate change and the environment. India's print media has been keeping the environment in mind since its initial phase [10]. In this, not only articles, stories, special reports, or editorials are published to spread awareness among the people, but special campaigns have also been started for the environment. These include Save Water, Green India, Hariyalo Rajasthan, Plastic Free India, etc. The print media is so concerned about the environment that, along with mainstream newspapers and magazines, many newspapers and magazines are being published specifically on serious topics like the environment, water conservation, sustainability, and environmental justice [11]. These include Down to Earth, Science Reporter, Terra Green, Century Asia, Eco India, Gaon Connection, India Water Portal, and Carbon Copy India. In the main newspapers of the print media in the country, extensive coverage is also being given on the Clean Ganga Mission, Jal Shakti Abhiyan, and COP Summit, so that awareness increases among the people.

About The Times of India

The Times of India (TOI) is the largest-selling English daily in Jaipur and one of India's most widely circulated English newspapers. Founded in 1838 as The Bombay Times and Journal of Commerce, it was initially established to serve British residents in colonial India. Renamed The Times of India in 1861, it remains India's oldest English daily still in circulation, maintaining a reputation for serious journalism, accuracy, and impartiality for over 185 years [12]. According to the Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC) 2022 report, TOI has a certified circulation of 3,057,678 copies, while the Indian Readership Survey (IRS) 2022 Q4 places its total readership at 5.56 million, making it one of the world's largest English-language dailies by readership.

TOI operates several regional supplements. In Jaipur, the daily pull-out Jaipur Times covers lifestyle, entertainment, and city events. Other supplements include Times Ascent (Wednesdays), focusing on job recruitment; Education Times (Mondays), a student-centric publication; Times Property (Saturdays), covering real estate; and Zigwheels, focusing on the automobile industry. TOI also runs a dedicated obituary section (Times Tribute) and publishes tenders and public notices under its Business by Bids column. With over 45 publications in multiple languages and business-to-business verticals like The Economic Times, TOI continues to be a powerhouse in Indian print media.

About Dainik Bhaskar

Dainik Bhaskar remains one of India's most influential Hindi-language daily newspapers, with a robust presence across 13 states and 65 editions in Hindi, Gujarati (Divya Bhaskar), and Marathi (Divya Marathi). Established in 1956 in Bhopal as Subah Savere, it adopted the name Dainik Bhaskar in 1958. According to the Audit Bureau of Circulations (ABC) report for January–December 2023, Dainik Bhaskar is the largest circulated daily in India across all languages, with a daily circulation of 3,126,656 copies [13]. This positions it ahead of competitors like Dainik Jagran and Malayala Manorama.

In Rajasthan, Dainik Bhaskar boasts a readership of approximately 6 million, making it the most-read newspaper in the state. Nationally, its digital footprint is significant, with the Dainik Bhaskar mobile app reaching 14.8 million monthly unique visitors as of May 2024, solidifying its status as India's top

news publisher app. Financially, DB Corp Ltd., the parent company of Dainik Bhaskar, reported an 8.4% year-on-year growth in advertising revenue for Q1 FY2025, amounting to Rs . 4,277 million. The company's EBITDA grew by 40.4% to Rs.1,909 million, reflecting effective cost management and a strong market position.

The objectives of the study are as follows:

- To assess the representation and prominence of climate change and sustainability issues in two leading Indian newspapers, *The Times of India* and *Dainik Bhaskar*.
- To analyze the editorial and front-page treatment of environmental topics during key environmental observance days (e.g., National Science Day, World Water Day) between 27 February and 23 March 2025.
- To compare the qualitative differences in environmental reporting approaches between English-language and Hindi-language print media in India.
- To examine the extent to which mainstream print media in India fulfils its responsibility as the 'fourth pillar of democracy' in raising public awareness and shaping discourse around climate change and sustainable development.

The structure of this article is as follows: Section 2 shows the methodology adopted for the Study. Section 3 presents the results and analysis. Section 4 presents a discussion. Section 5 concludes this review and provides the study's limitations and scope for future work.

METHODOLOGY:

This study employed a systematic review methodology encompassing problem identification, literature review, data collection, analysis, and qualitative interpretation. Secondary data served as the primary source of information. Content analysis was adopted as the core research technique. The study focused on analyzing coverage related to sustainable development and climate change in two major Jaipur-based newspapers: *Dainik Bhaskar* (Hindi) and *The Times of India* (English).

Review Methods:

This paper critically reviews the front page and the Edit page of *The Times of India* and *Dainik Bhaskar* published between 27 February and 23 March 2025. The time frame of this study has been chosen keeping in mind two important dates, National Science Day on 28 February and World Water Day on 22 March. Given the nature of media coverage of special days, 27 February has been included as newspapers often publish news, articles, or special columns related to the topic a day before as a 'curtain-raiser'. Similarly, 23 March has also been included in the category of analysis as reports of events and activities organised on 22 March are often published in the newspapers on the next day. The study aims to understand the priority with which these two leading national dailies presented important issues of sustainable development, such as science and water. It is analysed what space, language, and approach both newspapers gave to news, reports, opinion pieces, and editorials related to these topics on their front pages and editorial pages during this period.

The stipulated period covers a total of 25 days from 27 February to 23 March 2025. However, due to the festival of Holi, some changes were seen in the regular publication of newspapers during this period. *Dainik Bhaskar* did not publish the editions of 15 and 16 March due to the Holi holiday on 14 and 15 March 2025. At the same time, *The Times of India* did not publish the issue of that day only on 15 March in this period due to a holiday. Keeping this situation in mind, the Critical Review has analyzed the front pages and edit pages of 23 editions of *Dainik Bhaskar* and 24 editions of *The Times of India*.

Content Analysis

The Times of India Front Page-

On studying the front page of the *Times of India*, it was found that on average, 20 to 25 news items are published daily. In the 24 days studied, there were 8 days when half the page was dedicated to advertisements. Taking all these aspects into consideration, when the average was calculated, a total of 414 stories were published on the front page. The highest share in this figure was of news related to politics and governance, which was 193 in number. This included political activities and decisions at the

national and international levels. After this, news related to public interest and protests came in second place, which was 53 in total. In the third place, 51 news items related to crime and law, and order came out.

Table 1. TOI FRONT PAGE TABLE

Category	Number of Stories
Politics & Governance	193
Crime & Law	51
Disasters & Accidents	30
Public Issues & Protests	53
Top Human Interest / Inspirational Stories	18
Exclusive Investigations	12
Health	28
Environment and Climate	4
Sports	25
Total	414

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Table 1 indicates that environment-related news is at a very low level. In addition, 30 news items were focused on natural disasters and accidents, while 28 news items were related to health issues, and 25 on sports. 18 news items were registered in the human interest or inspirational category, while 12 stories were published in the category of exclusive or special reporting. During this period, only 4 news items related to climate change and the environment were published, which is less than one percent of the total news published. This study concludes that news related to politics and administration is given the highest priority on the front page of the Times of India, while serious global issues like environment and climate change get relatively very little importance.

The Times of India Edit Page

A total of 129 articles, columns, and editorials were published during the 24 days studied. One of these regular columns, The Speaking Tree, deals with spirituality and inspiration, while on some days a cartoon was published in place of an article. A deeper analysis of the articles published during this period reveals that topics related to politics and governance were given the highest priority. A total of 55 articles were published in this category, many of which were published as lead articles and focused on national politics and geopolitical issues. The number of human interest or inspirational articles was 21, most of

which appeared in The Speaking Tree column. Apart from this, 13 articles were published on crime and law, 11 articles on public issues and protests, 7 articles on health, and 5 articles on sports.

Table 2. TOI EDIT PAGE TABLE

Category	Number of Stories
Politics & Governance	55
Crime & Law	13
Disasters & Accidents	9
Public Issues & Protests	11
Top Human Interest / Inspirational Stories	21
Exclusive Investigations	8
Health	7
Environment and Climate	0
Sports	5
Total	129

The most shocking thing was that not a single article was published on important issues like the environment and climate change in the entire 24 days. This shows that these issues are being ignored at the editorial level, whereas this topic has become extremely important in the global context. There were only 2 articles in the 'Other' category, which were based on various topics, but they were also not related to the environment or climate change.

Dainik Bhaskar Front page review-

On average, 217 news items were published on the front page of Dainik Bhaskar during the given period. The classification of these news items shows the focus of news priorities. The highest number of news items was related to politics and governance, which was 73. This was followed by 45 related to crime and law, 21 disasters and accidents, 22 on public interest and protests, 16 on human sensitivity and inspirational stories, 9 on health, 15 investigative reports, and 13 on sports.

TABLE 3- DB FRONT PAGE TABLE

Category	Number of Stories
Politics & Governance	73
Crime & Law	45
Disasters & Accidents	21
Public Issues & Protests	22
Human Interest / Inspirational	16
Exclusive Investigations	15
Health	9
Environment and Climate	3
Sports	13
Total	217

It is worth noting that news on important topics like environment and climate change was published only on three days - 5, 11, and 17 March. This is only 1.3% of the total 230 news items, which shows that this serious global issue was not given the required priority. Apart from this, only 13 news were included in miscellaneous categories (like art-culture, science, technology, etc.), which were placed in the 'other' etc.) category.

Dainik Bhaskar Editorial page review-

In Dainik Bhaskar, the editorial page was published only on 16 days within the stipulated dates. On the remaining days, other types of content were given under different names. On average, 7-8 articles are regularly published on Bhaskar's editorial page. A total of 118 articles were published in the stipulated

period. Out of these, content related to environment and climate change was given on Bhaskar's editorial page on 6 days. On March 22, special half-page content was given on World Water Day, while on February 27, 05, 12, and 19, content was also published in single and double columns. Among these, 57 articles were published on politics and governance, 9 on crime and law, 2 on disaster and accident, 11 on public issues, 8 on human interest, 8 on health, and 5 on environment and climate, while 10 articles were in the category.

TABLE 4- DB EDIT PAGE TABLE

Category	Number of Stories
Politics & Governance	57
Crime & Law	9
Disasters & Accidents	2
Public Issues & Protests	11
Top Human Interest / Inspirational Stories	8
Exclusive Investigations	15
Health	3
Environment and Climate	5
Sports	8
Total	118

Findings and Results

The findings from the study of the front page and editorial pages of Dainik Bhaskar and The Times of India during the stipulated period of 25 days highlight the content priorities and reporting approach of the newspapers. Firstly, if we talk about the publication days, due to Holi, Dainik Bhaskar's 15th and 16th March issue was not published, while The Times of India's 15th March issue was not published. Hence, a total of 23 days for Dainik Bhaskar and 24 days for The Times of India formed the basis of the study.

Analysis of front-page articles

On average, 19 news items were published on the front page of The Times of India every day, which resulted in a total of 414 news items. Out of these, the maximum 193 news items were related to politics and governance, which is about 42% of the total news items. This was followed by 53 news items related to public interest and protest, 51 items related to crime and law, 30 on disaster and accidents, 28 on health, 18 on human interest, and 12 exclusive stories. Only 4 news stories were published on an important topic like climate change, which was less than 1% of the total news. This situation clearly shows that such a big global crisis was neglected in the prime space of the newspaper. A total of 217 news items were published on the front page of Dainik Bhaskar. Out of these, 73 news were related to politics and governance, 45 crime and law, 22 public interest issues, 21 disaster and accidents, 16 human interest, 9 health, 15 investigation-based based and 13 sports. Stories were published on environment and climate change only on three days (5, 11, and 17 March), which is about 1.3% of the total news. Thus, Bhaskar gave a slightly better but still minimum priority than the Times of India.

Analysis of editorial pages

A total of 129 articles or columns were published on the editorial page of the Times of India in 24 days. Of these articles, 55 were related to politics and governance, and 21 articles were published in motivational and spiritual columns like The Speaking Tree. There were 13 articles on crime and law, 7 on health, 5 on sports, and 11 on public interest. The worrying fact was that not a single article on climate change or the environment was published in the editorial during this period. This makes it clear that this issue was ignored even in the important means of policy making and public awareness creation - editorial discussion. In Dainik Bhaskar, editorial pages were published only for 16 days in the stipulated period, in which a total of 118 articles were published. Bhaskar's editorial page carried 57 articles on

politics, 9 on crime and law, 11 on public interest issues, 8 on human interest, and 8 on health. 5 articles were published on environment and climate change, one of which was a special coverage on half a page on World Water Day on March 22. Environmental topics were given space in single or double columns on the other four days as well. This situation is better than that of The Times of India, and it shows that Bhaskar played a slightly more aware and responsible role on environmental topics.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The front pages of both newspapers were mainly dominated by politics, crime, and public interest issues. Long-term global issues like climate change and environmental crisis were almost negligible on the front page. The absence of even a single article on this topic on the editorial page of an English newspaper like The Times of India shows that the environment is still not a priority in the national discourse. Dainik Bhaskar made limited efforts at the editorial level, but still, initiatives were visible in this direction. In both newspapers, current events and political developments were given more importance, while serious discussions on future crises were lacking. The analysis of coverage of environment and climate change issues in the Indian mainstream media shows that there is a significant difference between the severity of these issues and their media presentation. It is clear from quantitative evidence that the coverage rate of these issues is extremely low, where The Times of India gave environmental issues less than 1% of the news reports, while Dainik Bhaskar gave 1.3% coverage by performing a little better. Even more worrying is that no coverage on climate change was given on the editorial pages of The Times of India during this study period, while Dainik Bhaskar published only 5 articles on environmental issues of the total 118 editorials.

Findings and Future Research Scope

- It is clear from the analysis that political and governance-related news was given priority in both the Times of India and Dainik Bhaskar newspapers, while news related to environment and climate change was able to get less than 1.3% space on the homepage.
- The study highlights a worrying tendency, in which issues such as long-term sustainable growth and climate change are suppressed under the news of politics, crime and public interest.
- Dainik Bhaskar showed some initiatives through 5 editorial articles on environmental subjects (which includes special coverage on World Water Day), while The Times of India did not publish a single editorial article on the subject during the study period.
- The causes of climate change and minimum coverage of environmental issues in Indian print media should be investigated deeply.
- There is a need to develop strategies for editorial decision process, newsroom priorities, and effective reporting of environmental subjects.

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