Climate reality reassures India and China

There have been no signs of dangerous global warming for nearly two decades. Vijay Jayaraj finds that the developing world needs reliable energy and the coal preference continues.
As North America and western Europe recover from widespread record low temperatures earlier this month, whose impact was felt as far south as the tropics, other parts of the world are having second thoughts about the wisdom of trying to reduce global warming by replacing fossil fuels with wind, solar, and other renewable energy sources.

The severe cold put severe strain on electric grids as people struggled to keep warm. One thing that was apparent was that wind and solar simply cannot provide the instant-on-demand, reliable, predictable energy necessary to ensure public safety under such conditions.

So countries like India, China, and their Asian neighbours, already sceptical of climate doomsday predictions and demands to fight warming by abandoning fossil fuels, have additional reason to reassess their energy plans.

**Love for coal**

Climate alarmists successfully persuaded developing nations to climb aboard their climate doomsday bandwagon by signing onto the Paris climate treaty, as almost all did three years ago.

But developing countries were cautious about their commitments. Two of the world’s biggest carbon dioxide emitters, India and China, made very ambiguous commitments. Essentially they said they’ll continue expanding their fossil fuel (especially coal) use until sometime after 2030 and then, perhaps, rein it in a bit. But they said nothing that bound them to meaningful emission reductions.

Since then, they have secretly expanded their use of coal. That should have been no surprise. Both countries depend on coal for more than 70 percent of their respective domestic electricity needs.
Collectively, that means coal meets 70 percent of the electricity demands of nearly 3 billion people, or roughly 40 percent of the world’s population. Neither India nor China is willing to dump coal and risk running out of energy.

Now they can justify their love for coal purely on the basis of climate reality. What climate reality? The one that, in defiance of alarmists’ predictions, has shown no signs of dangerous warming for nearly two decades.

The lack of warming, despite contrary claims by the doomsday proponents, is one of the major reasons why neither India nor China will honour whatever little commitment they made at Paris.
No warming for 18+ years

Last week, India’s northern region experienced cold temperatures, heavy snowfall, incessant rain, and even a hailstorm that made the outskirts of Delhi (nearly the same latitude as Orlando, FL) look like a northern European city. This came after months of severe winter with record lows in many parts of the country.

That’s just one of many reasons why many of us here in India are largely unconcerned about global warming.

For example, the southern city of Chennai (where I live) recorded its highest temperature way back in 2003. Even the high El Niño weather anomaly of 2016 couldn’t top that record.

Since 2003, the urban heat island (UHI) effect in Chennai has increased due to rapid economic and population growth. One would have expected local temperatures to have risen considerably. But they didn’t, and they have shown no warming trend.

This lack of warming was not unique cities in India. In 2017, scientists found that there has been a “persisting and strong warming hiatus” over eastern China during the past two decades. In the same year, another scientific paper showed that northeast China has been cooling since 1998.

A more recently published (2019) peer-reviewed scientific journal affirmed the regional warming hiatus in China. It also confirmed that the impact of carbon dioxide emissions on the temperature levels was insignificant, and the temperature was controlled largely by natural variability in the climatic system.

Globally too, lower troposphere temperatures failed to rise significantly between 1999 and 2018.
There was no scientific reason for India and China—or any other country, for that matter—to pursue a campaign to save the earth from fossil fuels when the earth is not in peril.

Moreover, China and India have no option but to push for coal expansion to meet their domestic energy needs. Coal is the most affordable, easily accessible, and reliable energy source. Renewables, at their current state of development, cannot match the superior output from coal power plants. With the addition of clean coal technology, energy generation through coal has now become more efficient and less polluting.

The lack of warming, despite contrary claims by the doomsday proponents, is one of the major reasons why neither India nor China will honour whatever little commitment they made at Paris. Nature has now reassured both the countries in their quest for achieving energy freedom through fossil fuels.

Vijay Jayaraj (M.Sc., Environmental Science, University of East Anglia, England), is Contributor for Developing Countries, for the Cornwall Alliance for the Stewardship of Creation