

Paris climate dreams as India stays real

By Gary Johns, The Australian, 14 July 2017

French President Emmanuel Macron wants to hold another Paris conference. This time the world really, really wants to stop climate change. Macron wants developed nations to contribute \$100 billion a year to a climate fund to help Third World nations catch up to the First World in climate abatement. Dream on, Macron.

The reason he is asking is because not many kicked in at the last Paris climate fest. And that is completely understandable because the Greens keep telling us that renewables are now the cheapest source of energy. So why bankroll them?

Meanwhile, I doubt the US will contribute a red cent to Macron's fund. Nor should Australia. Instead, Donald Trump is getting on with cheap energy.

Trump's speech of June 29 was crystal clear. "Our country is blessed with extraordinary energy abundance, which we didn't know of, even five years ago ... We have nearly 100 years' worth of natural gas and more than 250 years' worth of clean, beautiful coal. We are a top producer of petroleum ... With these incredible resources, my administration will seek not only American energy independence that we've been looking for so long, but American energy dominance."

The US may fail to be "independent" or "dominant" but it sure will be cheap. Imagine an Australian prime minister making the same speech.

Australia, or at least South Australia, may think it is embracing the new world with its Tesla battery. So cool. But the Third World isn't. The Third World is getting on with infrastructure and burning coal, gas and oil. And so should Australia.

What do you think India, as one example, is up to in the old greenhouse parlour games?

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently announced 10 infrastructure projects for the "New India". These were all of a kind: cars, rail and ports. India is not gearing up for a post-industrial future. India is gearing up for an industrial future. It has started its longest road tunnel; an extraordinary sea bridge; standardised rail tracks; replacing railway crossings with rail bridges; replacing old road bridges; building 7000km of highways; new inland waterways and ports; and laying India's longest liquefied petroleum gas pipeline.

India will build the tallest bridge in the world over the river Chenab at Doda (359m above the river). That's progress.

In deference to climate change, or more likely for the money, India will increase its energy efficiency and develop its renewables. But the real deal is all about fossil fuels.

The International Energy Agency's report India Energy Outlook is sobering. Eighteen per cent of the world's population lives in India, but it uses only 6 per cent of the world's primary energy. India's energy consumption has almost doubled since 2000 and still 240 million have no access to electricity. India's power system needs to almost quadruple in size by 2040 to catch up with demand.

India will contribute about a quarter of the total projected rise in global energy demand, more than any other country. A total of 315 million people are expected to live in India's cities by

2040. They will switch to “modern fuels” — that is, to electricity — and cease to burn dung and sticks in their fires. They will need electricity, fuel for cars and lots of steel and concrete.

India will add more than 250 million passenger cars, 185 million two and three-wheel motorised vehicles, and 30 million trucks and vans. India’s reliance on oil imports will rise by more than 90 per cent by 2040.

More than half of new generation capacity to 2040 will come from renewables and nuclear, but new coal-fired plants in India represent almost half of the net coal capacity added worldwide. India will need to add to its power system the equivalent of 80 per cent of that of the US to keep pace with the demand for electricity.

The large expansion of coal output makes India the second largest coal producer, but rising demand also means that India will become, before 2020, the largest coal importer, overtaking Japan, the EU and China.

And India’s energy-related CO₂ emissions will rise substantially because coal demand will be 2½ times higher by 2040 (although still only about half the projected level in China).

Give me Adani, give me a new coal-fired power station. Keep Paris for dreamers and fakes, and South Australian premiers with their bulldust boutique batteries.