Good news is very hard to come by nowadays, so this recent analysis from the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air, a Finnish think tank, is particularly welcome:

> India's carbon dioxide (CO_2) emissions from its power sector fell by 1% year-on-year in the first half of 2025 and by 0.2% over the past 12 months, only the second drop in almost half a century.
>
> Other key findings on India for the first six months of 2025 include:
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> - The growth in clean-energy capacity reached a record 25.1 gigawatts (GW), up 69% year-on-year from what had, itself, been a record figure.
> - This new clean-energy capacity is expected to generate nearly 50 terawatt hours (TWh) of electricity per year, nearly sufficient to meet the average increase in demand overall.
> - Slower economic expansion meant there was zero growth in demand for oil products, a marked fall from annual rates of 6% in 2023 and 4% in 2024.
> - Government infrastructure spending helped accelerate CO_2 emissions growth from steel and cement production, by 7% and 10%, respectively.

Let’s unpack this a bit. At least at this point I would not be disheartened by any references to “slower economic growth.” India’s economy is projected to grow by 6.5% this year – it is still roaring ahead. So then how did power sector emissions decline?

First, the weather. Unlike last year, India did not experience massive heatwaves, which meant less energy demand. Moreover, a strong monsoon meant that dams were full, and that meant more hydroelectric power was available. We obviously cannot count on this every year, or even most years, so this does not tell us much.

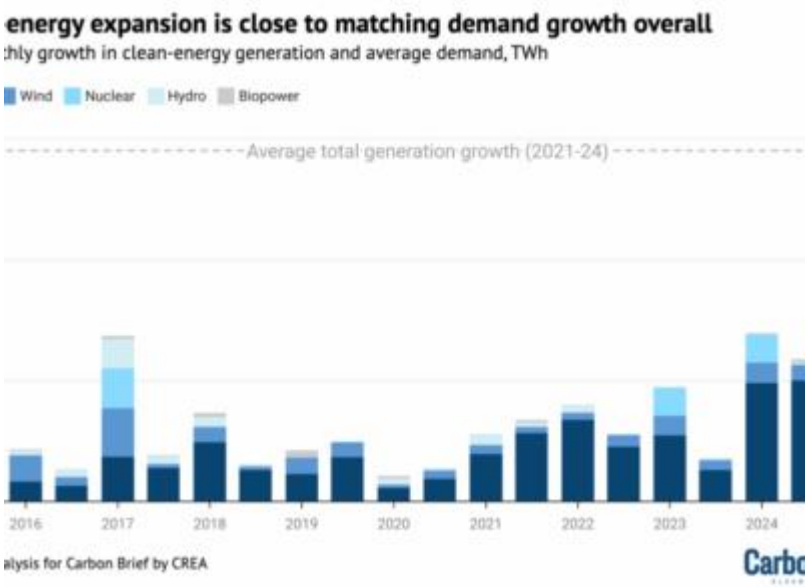
But second, as the bullet points suggest, clean energy capacity is ramping up. Anyone who spent time in a hot Indian summer (or even a hot Indian winter) knows that the subcontinent has access to lots of solar power.

Other sectors of India’s emissions picture also present opportunities, particularly a large increase in electric vehicles. But there are big warning signs.

Remember that the topline data here only speaks about emissions from India’s *power sector.* But CREA reports that emissions from the cement and steel sectors are still increasing sharply. That makes sense: not only are cement and steel emissions-intensive, but the India’s government has placed a great emphasis on infrastructure development, which India actually needs.

That means in turn that in order to make progress on climate, power sector emission reductions will need to offset those from sectors from which emissions will be harder to reduce.

The good news is that in India’s case that seems possible. CREA provides a helpful graphic showing how clean power has drastically increased and can provide for India’s increasing power needs:



The bad news is that India is still ramping up coal-fired production, which the CREA laconically notes "might yet prove unneeded." Given the sharp increase in clean energy capacity, it seems redundant also to push coal.

"Might yet prove unneeded" does not, of course, mean "unneeded." And since India has the world's fourth-largest coal reserve, one can see why a government might nor foreswear its use. But I am suspicious that increasing coal production might less be an economic development issue and more a political economy issue: which interests stand to benefit from more coal-fired plants?

India is particularly susceptible to climate change. It will bear the brunt of increasing heatwaves. It is surely no accident that Kim Stanley Robinson's novel *Ministry for the Future* begins with India's government taking extreme geoengineering measures to stop the heat.

CREA tries to stick closely to the facts in this analysis, and that is all to the good. But India's environmental advocacy sector might well push back on the government's seeming commitment to coal. India stands to benefit from a reduction in coal-fired plants: it is time for a temporary pause in coal-fired power plant permits until we know how much clean energy can provide.

But there is also a broader point revealed here: the rest of the world is moving on from the United States. In America, we still have knuckle-draggers like EPA Administrator Zeldin parroting the Dear Leader's lies that climate change is a hoax.

Trump’s regime is klling investments in renewables in order to subsidize coal and other high-carbon fuels. This will set back US technological leadership — already being destroyed by the administration’s war on universities and scientific institutions. Other nations will pick up some slack, leaving the United States behind. On February 17, 1941, even before Pearl Harbor, Time publisher Henry Luce proclaimed the dawn of the American Century. It turned out it lasted only 75 years.